Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

$1

Probable cause found to try alleged burglar. PAGE 2
Court denies writ of execution sought by IPI creditors. PAGE 3

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HAALAND MEETING
Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and CPA board chair Jose Ayuyu last week met with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland to discuss a number of topics that included funding assistance for various CNMI projects and economic initiatives. The governor thanked the secretary, who was joined by assistant secretary of the Interior Carmen Cantor, deputy assistant of the Interior Secretary Keone Nakoa, and Office of Insular Affairs director John Brewer, for her support and advocacy of the CNMI. Palacios' travel to the capital, which included meetings with other leaders from different federal agencies and military branches, was funded through a federally sourced grant.
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

USCIS SAYS:

80% processing of CW petitions, touchback completed in 1 month

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sablan

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) disclosed over the weekend that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' processing times for I-129 CW CNMI-Only Nonimmigrant Transitional Worker petitions, including for CW workers touching back in their home countries after three years in the Marianas, were mostly completed within just a month.

See TOUCHBACK on Page 4

Kingman withdraws subpoena vs. Torres' former campaign treasurer

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The subpoena issued against former governor Ralph DLG Torres' campaign treasurer has been withdrawn, essentially rendering moot the lawsuit filed she against the Office of the Attorney General and the CNMI government.

See KINGMAN on Page 4

House repeals, reenacts newly passed statute on $15M MPLT line of credit

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A just-enacted law that authorizes a $15-million line of credit with the Marianas Public Land Trust has gotten a fresh do-over, barely two months after being enacted into law by Gov. Arnold I. Palacios last Nov. 20.

The House of Representatives passed Friday a bill that repeals and re-enacts the public law that authorizes the Commonwealth government to negotiate a revolving line of

See HOUSE on Page 4

'The matter in question is now under investigation'

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

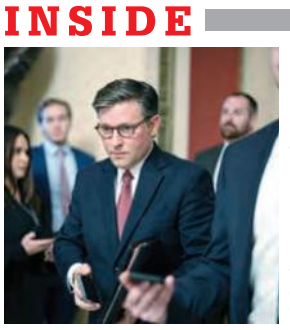
Camacho

Newly-appointed Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence Camacho says the "matter" about a Marianas High School staff member's alleged misconduct "is currently under investigation" and that the CNMI Public School System is "committed to transparency, the safety of each student, and maintaining the trust of our community."

In response to

See MATTER on Page 4

INSIDE



NATION
Congressional leaders are preparing a stopgap bill to keep the federal government running into March and avoid a partial shutdown next week.
PAGE 12

ASIA
Lai Ching-te, Taiwan's president-elect, has vowed to safeguard the island's de-facto independence from China and further align it with other democracies.
PAGE 13

HEALTH & FITNESS
It is commonly thought that vaccines are mostly given during childhood. Not true at all. Adult vaccination plays a critical role in safeguarding adult health as well.
PAGE 14

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Local

Probable cause found to try alleged burglar

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has found probable cause to try a man accused of threatening another man with a knife while burglarizing his house.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho has found probable cause to try Joseph Lee on charges of burglary, assault with a dangerous weapon, and theft.

Lee is accused of brandishing a knife at a man whose home he was allegedly burglarizing.

"The court heard the testimony as presented by…police detective Daniel Kaipat and based upon the matters adduced at the hearing, the court finds probable cause to believe that the crimes of burglary, theft, and assault with a dangerous weapon were committed and the person who may have committed said offenses is Joseph Lee. The defendant is therefore held to answer said charges," Camacho's order stated.

Lee was ordered to return to court on Feb. 22, for a status conference. He was remanded back to Department of Corrections custody.

According to court documents, the Department of Public Safety received a report at around 5:58am on Dec. 25, 2023, about a burglary and theft incident in progress. The caller, Jeffrey Hofschneider Jr., informed police that there was a man inside his house stealing items and that he was armed with a knife.

At the scene, Hofschneider told police that he heard noises outside his room at about 4:30am, but he thought it was the wind and the leaves blowing, so he just ignored it.

A louder sound roused him at around 5am, so he looked outside his bedroom and that's when he allegedly saw a man crouched in the living room, trying to pack a karaoke machine inside a bag.

Hofschneider told police he yelled at the man and the defendant allegedly picked up a knife and charged at

See BURGLAR on Page 4

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01
Saipan Tribune was among the most frequently used and trusted local news sources among CNMI residents surveyed
02
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of CNMI residents surveyed perceived the Saipan Tribune to be "trustworthy" or "very trustworthy"
03
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of CNMI residents surveyed reported using Saipan Tribune "often" or "all the time" as a local news source
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Court denies writ of execution sought by IPI creditors

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has denied the writ of execution sought by Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC creditors who were previously granted judgments by the Superior Court.

The creditors—Fujitec Pacific Inc., Hemine Ipwan Islam dba IPWAN Security Services and GT Building Systems International Ptd.—are allegedly owed over $500,000 by IPI and the Superior Court had awarded them judgments that have yet to be satisfied. The two companies have sought in the district court a writ of execution against IPI's personal property in order to pay the judgments.

However, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona has denied the motion because the creditors only have state court judgments—not federal court judgments.

"Here, the CNMI judgment creditors do not have federal court judgments. Nor do they seek to register their judgments under an applicable federal statute. Because it is clear 'Rule 69 is not available to enforce state court judgments in federal court,' and the CNMI judgment creditors seek to enforce state court judgments pursuant to Rule 69, the court denies the application for writ of execution as to the CNMI judgment creditors. Rule 69 is not a vehicle through which federal courts can enforce state court judgments, which is exactly what the CNMI judgment creditors are attempting to accomplish," said Manglona in her order.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, the IPI judgment creditors, through lawyer Colin Thompson, applied for a writ of execution in the U.S. District Court for the NMI against IPI's personal properties.

The creditors asked the district court to issue a writ of execution against IPI's vehicles, liquor, IPI's crystal dragons, IPI's computer hardware, IPI's furniture and equipment, IPI's casino-related and security equipment, and any other non-exempt personal property identified by the creditors to be sold in an auction to satisfy the IPI creditors' judgments.

According to the application, the Superior Court entered three judgments in favor of Fujitec against IPI: judgment in the amount of $1,288,603.95 plus post-judgment interest at the rate of 9% per annum on Jan. 3, 2023; judgment in the amount of $1,378,056.50 plus post-judgment interest at the rate of 9% per annum on Jan. 26, 2023; and three judgments on attorney's fees and costs in the amount of $12,295.50 plus post-judgment interest at the rate of 3% per annum on April 14, 2023.

The Superior Court also entered a judgment in favor of IPWAN in the amount $188,125.30 plus post-judgment interest at the rate of 9% per annum against IPI on Dec. 13, 2022.

As for GT Building, the Superior Court entered a judgment in favor of the creditor in the amount of $833,816.48 plus post-judgment interest at the rate of 9% per annum against IPI on March 9, 2022.

GT Building also applied for two writs of executions against IPI, and another writ of execution remains pending. The amount seized from IPI to satisfy the GT Building judgment, including the pending writ of execution, is in the amount $74,086.89.

This leaves the remaining amount against IPI from the GT Building's judgment at $759,729.59 plus post-judgment interest.

Register for Chamber's Business Person of the Year Gala

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce is gearing up for its upcoming Annual Business Person of the Year Gala, slated to take place on Jan. 27 at the Kensington Hall, Kensington Hotel Saipan with the theme "Hafa Adai yan Tirow."

This gala is not only a celebration of business excellence in the CNMI but also a momentous occasion for the induction of the Chamber's newly elected and returning board of directors.

The Chamber would like to extend the invitation to the community to join us for a memorable evening filled with elegance, recognition, and a touch of local flair, as it encourages attendees to dress in island formal wear to embrace the island's unique style.

This gala will feature awards in several categories, including the 2023 Chamber Member of the Year, 2023 Non-profit of the Year, 2023 Small Business of the Year, and the newly introduced 2023 Sustainable Business of the Year, in collaboration with the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance, a proud Chamber member. The selected awardee of each category must have demonstrated exceptional dedication, innovation, and community impact throughout the year.

The highlight and tradition of the evening will be the awarding of the 2023 Business Person of the Year, a recognition granted to an individual who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and influence within the business community and beyond.

Tickets are available for $150 per person, inclusive of an open bar. Join the Chamber and make it a memorable night with live music, silent auction activities, dinner, networking, and good vibes. The Chamber is also accepting group reservations for tables of eight at $1,100, inclusive of the open bar and a complimentary premium bottle of wine.

The Chamber invites the community to join us for this night of celebration! Register now through this link: https://business.saipanchamber.com/events/details/2023-annual-business-person-of-the-year-gala-355

In addition, the Chamber is proud to recognize and express gratitude to our esteemed sponsors for their support. Their commitment to our business collective is appreciated.

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- Island Training Solutions
- Northern Marianas Technical Institute
- LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort Saipan

The Chamber invites businesses and organizations to support this event through sponsorship. If you are interested or if you have any questions, you can contact the Chamber office at (670) 234-7150 or via email at contactus@saipanchamber.org.

"Don't miss the opportunity to join in on the fun at one of the Chamber's Signature Events of the Year," it said.

The Chamber is a non-profit organization in the CNMI with a membership of 140 members and growing. SCC is committed to empowering our enterprise as a resource, advocate, and connector for Saipan's private sector, our vision is to create an Island where businesses, family, and the community succeed as one. ***(Chamber)***

PIPE REPAIR FERDIE DE LA TORRE
Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Water Division crew work on the repair of CUC's leaking PVC pipe on the shoulder road of Chalan Pali Arnold Road corner Hapon Drive in Gualo Rai last Wednesday morning. As a valve was also broken, the repair was done Wednesday night. The crew, however, returned to the site last Thursday after receiving calls that some residents did not receive water supply. The repair was completed last Thursday at 4pm, according to Kevin Watson, CUC's deputy executive director for the Water and Wastewater Division.

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PRO SE

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Change of Name of:	]	FCD CN CIVIL ACTION NO. 24-0011
J.J. Ogo Barcinas	]	**NOTICE OF HEARING**
Petitioner	]	

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on January 26, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom Rota, before Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja.

Dated this 10th day of January, 2024.

Patrick Diaz
Clerk of Court

/s/ Judge Joseph Norita Camacho

Name: Catlyn Gozum Ortiz
Address: P.O. Box 505948
Saipan, MP 96950
Phone: (670) 588-2255
Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petitioner for the Change of Name of:	]	FCD CN CIVIL ACTION NO. 23-0529
CNGL Minor Child(ren)	]	**NOTICE OF HEARING**
By:	]	
Catlyn Gozum Ortiz Petitioner(s)	]	

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on March 4, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom 217A, before Honorable Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Dated this 3rd day of January, 2024.

Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court

/s/ Novelyn Wania-Tenorio
By: Deputy Clerk of Court

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-005

OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR CUC ROTA's ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS & OPERATIONS

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the lease of a suitable office and operations support facility for the Headquarters of CUC's Administration and Operations on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The proposed office space must comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA), DPW, OSHA and CNMI Zoning regulation.

The IFB package may be obtained at the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration with CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package will be emailed to the registered Proponents email ID. For registration inquiries, please email Marcela Tenorio, CUC Senior Administrative Technician via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-24-005, Office Space Lease for CUC Rota's Administrative Functions and Operations."* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 9, 2024,** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024 to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Alvin King, CUC Rota Resident Manager at email address alvin.king@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Fire damages apartment in Garapan

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A fire damaged an apartment building and local shop in Garapan yesterday morning. As of press time, the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services continues to investigate the incident.

According to DFEMS spokesperson Rob Mojica, the structure fire happened in Garapan right next to the Pajukol Korean Restaurant. Because the incident is still under investigation, the cause of the fire has yet to be determined, he added.

There were no fatalities or injuries, Mojica said.

He said DFEMS responded just in time to prevent the fire from engulfing the entire building.

"The structure is a retail clothing store with the second floor serving as an apartment complex with occupants. There were no injuries and no fatalities," he said.

At the site, Saipan Tribune observed burn marks along the sides of the building, but no major damage.

According to an individual who lives in the area, they are unsure what caused the fire but it did not spread to a point that would have resulted in major destruction.

Saipan Tribune also observed that the retail store at the bottom of the building remains open and undamaged.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
A structure in Garapan just next to Pajukol Korean Restaurant was damaged by a fire yesterday morning.

HOUSE

From page 1

credit with the Marianas Public Land Trust in the amount of $15 million with repayment terms.

All 17 House members present during a session voted "yes" to House Bill 23-95, House Substitute 1, that Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) introduced. The bill was then forwarded to the Senate for action.

Last Nov. 20, Palacios signed House Bill 23-77, Senate Draft 1, into Public Law 23-12 to authorize the $15-million line of credit.

Under Villagomez's new bill, language was added to Public Law 23-12 stating that this legislation authorizes and pledges the funds which MPLT would distribute as interest income to the general fund pursuant to Article 11, Section 6 of the Constitution as security and for repayment of the $15-million line of credit with the Commonwealth government through the Department of Finance at an annual interest rate of 5.5%.

House Bill 23-95, HS1, also states that the Legislature agrees and consents that MPLT may withhold from its annual interest income distribution to the Commonwealth for each fiscal year as security and to guarantee payment for the $15-million line of credit until that credit facility is retired and fully satisfied.

Before the voting, Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao (Ind-Saipan), who is one of the co-sponsors of the legislation, explained why they need to repeal and re-enact the original public law.

Attao said the administration, along with the MPLT board of trustees, reached out to the House and Senate to restore the original language that the House passed during the deliberations, which was amended by the Senate.

He said the House also voted to pass the Senate's version of the bill with the understanding that the administration and MPLT will be addressing their differences under the contractual negotiations for the line of credit.

Attao said there are legal issues raised by the administration and MPLT, therefore the intent of this latest bill is to make sure that both the administration and the MPLT are satisfied.

"As we mentioned during the deliberation under what became Public Law 23-12, we are borrowing money from MPLT. And we want to make sure that MPLT is also satisfied with the language of the law," he said.

Attao said he is hoping that the Senate will pass this legislation soon so that MPLT and the administration can get back to the drawing board and get this contractual agreement signed so that a lot of U.S. Economic Development Administration projects that are ongoing can proceed forward.

During the signing of Public Law 23-12, Palacios stated that the line of credit allows the administration to immediately provide seed funding to facilitate progress payments for EDA-funded projects in the CNMI, improve payment turnaround time to contractors, and expedite project completion. Palacios said that this line of credit also supports revenue generation for the CNMI through tax collections.

The governor requested this line of credit as a sort of "bridge financing or advances" for costs related to EDA projects that will help expedite the progress of about $100 million worth of CIPs.

The EDA grants have been awarded on a reimbursement basis to a number of CNMI agencies.

Under H. B. 23-95, HS1, the line of credit from MPLT will allow the CNMI government to front the funds due to vendors, such as architectural and construction firms. The CNMI government can then seek reimbursement of these funds from the EDA.

The interest rate shall be 5.5% per annum.

KINGMAN

From page 1

Last week, assistant attorney general James Kingman withdrew the subpoena issued against Zerlyn Alcazar Taimanao, saying the action is a choice made by the OAG not to enforce it.

Taimanao was Torres' former campaign treasure when he was running for office alongside former lawmaker Vinnie Sablan in the 2022 election.

In a letter to Taimanao's attorney, Keith Chambers, Kingman said the choice to withdraw the subpoena does not constitute admission or agreement to any of the arguments that had been made to oppose the subpoena.

"We will not take action to enforce this subpoena. The deadline for compliance with the subpoena was extended by 30 days. The subpoena was issued under its cross-designation with the law-enforcement authority of the Office of the Public Auditor. It refers to the legal authority for the OPA to obtain the documents for the Committee to Elect. Neither the extension of the deadline nor the choice to withdraw and not move to enforce the subpoena should be read as an admission or agreement of any legal insufficiency to the subpoena's issuance or the capacity of the task force, OPA, or Office of Attorney General to apply for such subpoenas," said Kingman.

Chambers, for his part, filed last week a motion to dismiss Taimanao's lawsuit against the OAG, stating that, with the subpoena now withdrawn, there is no longer a need to pursue the suit.

"The OAG has withdrawn the subpoena, the service of which resulted in this lawsuit. Because the subpoena has been withdrawn, there is no longer an existing controversy here. Therefore, plaintiff Taimanao respectfully moves this court to dismiss this action without prejudice," he said.

Dismissal without prejudice means the lawsuit has been dismissed but can be refiled later.

Back in December 2023, Taimanao, through Chambers, sued the OAG and the CNMI government in Superior Court for the subpoena she got for the role she played in the Torres-Sablan campaign committee.

According to the complaint, after the 2022 election that concluded in November 2022, Taimanao submitted her report on the campaign's statement of account to the Office of the Public Auditor.

Soon after, the commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, the public auditor, and the attorney general executed a memorandum of agreement establishing the Joint White-Collar Crime, Government Corruption and Financial Crimes task force.

On or about Oct. 31, 2023, the OAG applied for a subpoena *duces tecum* with the Superior Court clerk of court, which was to be served on Taimanao in her official capacity, and on Vinnie Sablan in his personal capacity.

On Oct. 31, 2023, the clerk issued a subpoena *duces tecum* pursuant to the OAG's application and Taimanao was served that same day.

The subpoena requested written record of all contributions and expenses made to and by the Torres-Sablan campaign committee.

Taimanao, through her lawyer, claims that the subpoena was invalid and unlawful.

Specifically, Chambers argued that the OAG does not have the authority to issue a subpoena, and the public auditor lacks the authority to investigate a campaign committee or subpoena any materials from it.

In addition, Chambers argued that the Joint White-Collar Crime, Government Corruption and Financial Crimes task force is invalid as there is no legislative authority authorizing the task force.

TOUCHBACK

From page 1

Sablan said in his *e-kilili* newsletter that, according to USCIS, most I-129CW petitions usually took three to five months to process, but the process has speeded up since the start of fiscal year 2024 on Oct. 1, 2023, when 80% of petitions were completed within one month.

The touchback rule—a requirement of the 2018 Northern Marianas U.S. Workforce Act that required foreign workers to return to their home countries before their third consecutive work visa petition is processed—began to kick in for most workers last year and there were concerns it may cause a hardship on employers and workers. But Sablan said that has not happened, with majority of touchback visas being processed rapidly.

The delegate said USCIS' processing times can be monitored online at https: //egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/.

Sablan said a goal of the Northern Marianas Workforce Act was to bring more U.S. workers into the Marianas labor force and that number was increased by 2,285 since 2018.

At the same time, he said, employers continued to have access to CW workers. The cap on CW visas in 2023 was 11,000. USCIS issued 5,789 CW visas for that year.

The Palacios-Apatang administration had asked U.S. Congress and U.S. Homeland Security to repeal or delay the implementation of the touchback provision, which took effect for most workers in September 2023. Since then, it is now the rule for CNMI employers to send their CW-visa holders back to their home countries at least every three years.

Palacios repeatedly stated in previous statements that the touchback provision will adversely impact many businesses in the CNMI when implemented.

MATTER

From page 1

Saipan Tribune's inquiries about the alleged misconduct last Friday morning, Camacho said in an email response that their top priority is the "well-being and security of our students, staff, and the community we serve."

Camacho said they are working with the Department of Public Safety and the Division of Youth Services for a "thorough and impartial investigation."

"Their expertise and involvement will contribute to a comprehensive assessment of the situation," he added.

He then said that PSS has no further comments to provide, but that they are committed to keeping the community informed as developments arise or circumstances change.

"We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in allowing the investigative process to unfold. The safety and well-being of our students and the trust of our community remain paramount, and we are dedicated to maintaining the highest standards in addressing this matter," said Camacho.

Separately, MHS principal Jonathan Aguon sent an email last Thursday to parents along similar lines as Camacho's response.

Both PSS and DPS have not revealed any details of the alleged misconduct, but social media chatter has divulged what misconduct allegedly happened and identified the MHS teacher who is reportedly involved. *Saipan Tribune* is withholding those details for now until authorities officially release that information.

BURGLAR

From page 2

Hofschneider. The victim, however, managed to close and lock his bedroom door.

At that point, Hofschneider said he took out his service weapon and warned the burglar he had a gun and would shoot. He then called police for assistance.

Some of the things Lee allegedly stole were a Magic Sing Karaoke set, microchips, a laptop, shoes, alcoholic beverages, a hat, shorts, and the key to a Nissan Titan car, along with some house keys.

Lee was identified by a neighbor who sent Hofschneider a photo of the suspect and Hofschneider allegedly identified the clothes that Lee was wearing as among the items that had been stolen.

Hofschneider later positively identified Lee in a police line-up as the man whom he allegedly saw inside his house on Christmas Day.

Finu' Chamorro for Beginners to hold book launch

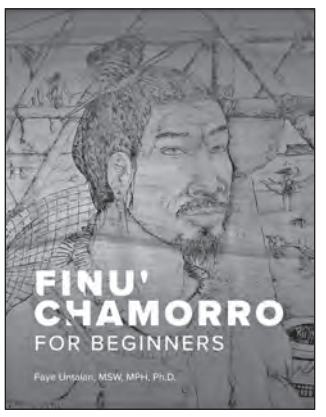
The University of Guam Press is launching *Finu' Chamorro for Beginners* by Dr. Faye Untalan under their Proa Publications imprint at Northern Marianas College on Saipan.

Finu' Chamorro is a thorough and hands-on instructional guide with language exercises for CHamoru language learners of all levels. It is the first post-secondary CHamoru language curriculum created with contributions from an expert panel of CHamoru scholars, instructors, and fluent native speakers.

"Not able to learn their language at home, Chamorro youths look to schools, places and opportunities to learn their native language. The *Finu' Chamorro* textbook is a resource for all Chamorros who desire to learn their language," says Untalan, who is a pioneer and leading expert on the CHamoru language and has widely-published research on CHamoru culture and diaspora in the United States.

Untalan shares that the book's content and lessons not only cover language and orthographic rules of the NMI but also offer a glimpse into the diverse traditions of the Chamorro people.

"Young Chamorros living in a multicultural society seek cultural identifiers to establish their identity. Knowing their language affirms their identity," says Untalan. "We need to develop resources and opportunities for our youths who want to learn Chamorro, their native language."



UOG

The *Finu' Chamorro for Beginners* book launch will be held at the American Memorial Park on Saipan on Saipan this Friday, Jan. 19, at 5:30pm.

The *Finu' Chamorro* book launch will be held at the American Memorial Park on Saipan, NMI on Friday, Jan. 19, 2024, at 5:30pm.

The event will include an author signing and a discussion of the text with a panel of leading experts on CHamoru language and culture that includes Untalan; Leo Pangelinan, executive director of the Northern Marianas Humanities Council; Dr. Barbara Hunter, interim director of the School of Business at NMC; and Manny Borja, a long-standing CHamoru author, advocate, and educator.

UOG

Finu' Chamorro for Beginners author Faye Untalan.

Details for the book's launch on Guåhan are forthcoming. Guåhan-based patrons interested in attending are encouraged to follow UOG Press on Instagram and Facebook at @uogpress for updates.

Pre-orders of *Finu' Chamorro for Beginners* are available now for a special launch price of $45 at uogpress.com.

For CNMI-based orders and inquiries, contact Kevin Bautista, executive director of the Office of the President at NMC at kevin.bautista@marianas.edu or (670) 237-6703; for all other inquiries contact UOG Press publicist Via De Fant at defantv@triton.uog.edu or (671) 735-2153.

The University of Guam Press publishes an array of academic and literary books and journals with a specific focus on the unique history, environment, peoples, cultures, and languages of the islands that make up the Western Pacific region. Visit uogpress.com to learn more about them and browse their wide selection of local art and literature. ***(UOG)***

Community First selects 6th generation of college interns

MANGILAO, Guam—Community First Guam Federal Credit Union announced the selection of two Guam students for its spring 2024 Community First Internship Program, which develops and mentors college students from the University of Guam and Guam Community College to pursue careers in the finance industry.

Community First welcomes the following interns selected for the 2024 Spring program:

■ **Jovelyn Concepcion**

University of Guam student majoring in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting and graduating in the spring of 2026

■ **Lana Paulino**

Guam Community College student pursuing a degree in Computer Science and graduating in the fall of 2024

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Community First Guam Federal Credit Union selects two Guam students pursuing degrees from the University of Guam and Guam Community College for its spring 2024 Community First Internship Program. From left, Jovelyn Concepcion, University of Guam student majoring in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting; and Lana Paulino, Guam Community College student majoring in Computer Science.

Concepcion and Paulino will join three interns who are continuing their program from fall 2023:

■ Princess Fernandez, University of Guam student pursuing a Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting degree and graduating in the fall of 2024

■ Bryne Garcia, University of Guam student studying Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting and graduating in the spring of 2024

■ David Lagman, University of Guam student studying Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting and graduating in the spring of 2024

Gerard Cruz, president and CEO of Community First, stated, "Now in its sixth year, the Community First Internship Program has trained and developed more than 40 interns from Guam's higher learning institutions. Our team is committed to the success of this program because it provides our island's students with firsthand experience in the finance industry."

During the program, students earn an income while they are mentored by a Community First manager and trained in the credit union's policies and procedures. The interns utilize their experience to springboard into a career in the finance industry while gaining valuable experience working part-time and earning their degrees. Students work around their class schedules and train as a team two days a week.

Cruz added, "We encourage college students interested in working in finance to apply for our internship program this summer for the upcoming fall term. Our interns benefit from mentorships and gain valuable experience, which are valuable when applying for jobs after graduation."

Community First launched the student-run credit union in January 2018 in the heart of Mangilao, strategically located near the UOG and GCC. This student-run service center, the first of its kind in Guam, is operated by college students enrolled at UOG and GCC. The service center is open to serve all existing and new Community First members.

Community First Guam Federal Credit Union is a community-chartered, full-service financial institution serving the community of Guam since 1962. The credit union has four Member Service Centers: the new 15,000-square-foot Hagåtña Headquarters and Member Service Center, Tamuning, Dededo, and Guam's first Student-Run Service Center in Mangilao. The credit union is federally insured by the National Credit Union Administration. Engage with Community First online at cfirstguam.com or on Facebook and Instagram (@cfirstguam). ***(PR)***

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)
NMHC IFB 2024-005

(This ad is paid by NMHC by HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME: February 08, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

Rehabilitation of the Sinapalo Youth Center

Project package will be available on **December 29, 2023,** at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays. A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars ($100.00)** is required for each set of the project package. Payment must be made payable to NMHC and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the project package at the reception counter.

The provisions of the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Bid conference will be at the NMHC Field Office in Rota located in Sinapalo, Rota on **January 19, 2024, 2:00 p.m.** Failure to attend the Mandatory Pre-bid conference will be considered a non-responsive bidder. Immediately after the Mandatory Pre-Bid conference, bidders are required to join the NMHC Personnel to visit and examine the project site. Failure to attend the project site visit will be considered a non-responsive bidder. Inquiries regarding this solicitation must be addressed in writing to Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net or mail at P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 9650 or via fax at (670)234-9021, no later than 4:00 p.m. January 30, 2023.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer, at (670)234-6866/9447 or email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

/s/ MERCED "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

OPENING DATE: December 28, 2023 **CLOSING DATE: January 19, 2024 TIME: 4:00 P.M.**

NMHC JVA No.	Positions:	Salary
2024-004	CDBG-DR Accountant	$$25,000.00-$30,000.00 per annum- UNGRADED

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information may be accessed at www.nmhcgov.net or www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.

Applicants may submit their applications through the following options: Submission at the at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan; or at the Drop Box located in front of the NMHC Central Office building; or email application and documents to officemanager@nmhcgov.net.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre-employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-6866/9447or by email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net . NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL LICENSING
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Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel No: (670) 664-4809 Fax: (670) 664-4814
Email: info@cnmilicensing.gov.mp
Website: www.cnmilicensing.gov.mp

Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, through the Health Care Professions Licensing Board (HCPLB) hereby gives notice that it will hold its regular monthly board meeting on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 8 a.m. on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Board of Professional Licensing Conference Room, BPL Building on Capitol Hill.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes (12/20/2023)
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairperson's Report
VII. Director's Report
- Update Localgov online payment
- Financial Report

VIII. Investigator's Report
IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
A. Governor's Office
B. Legislature
X. Old Business
XI. New Business
- Special Facility Permit

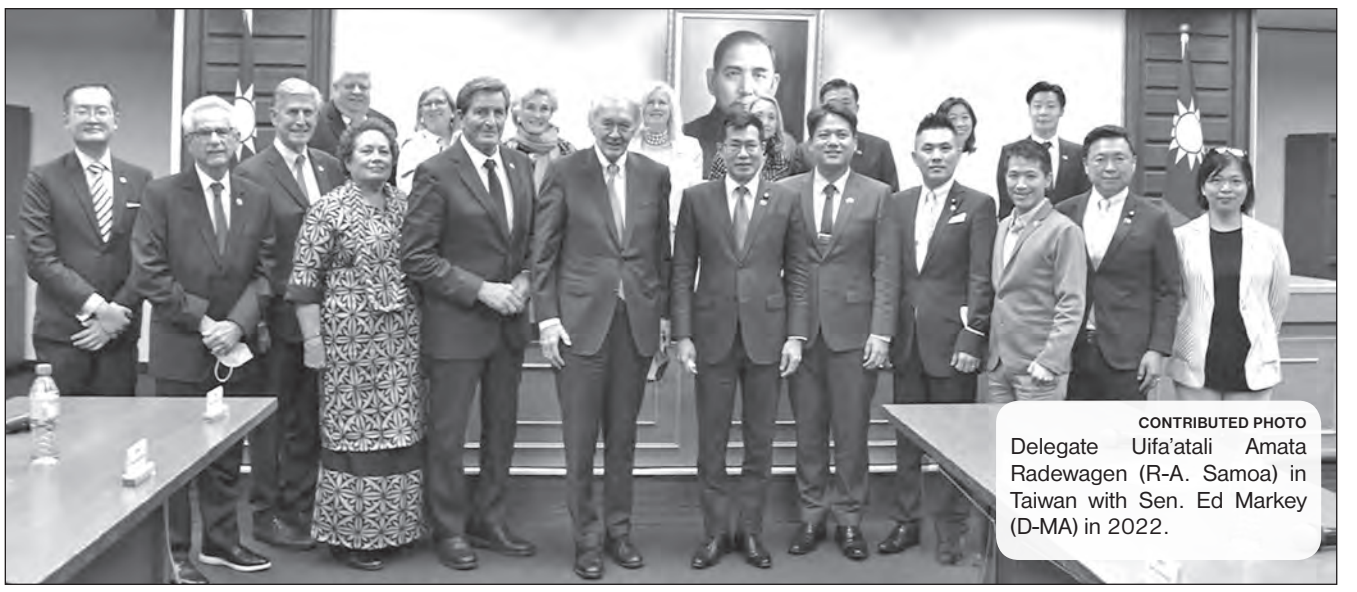
XII. Pending Applications for Board's Review
A. New Application
B. Renewal Application
XIII. Miscellaneous Business
XIV. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with Counsel on pending or anticipated legal matters.
- Special Facility Permit

XV. Announcements
A. Next Meeting Date
B. Adjournment of Meeting

Radewagen welcomes Taiwan elections

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) is welcoming the completion of Taiwan's democratic elections and congratulating the elected leadership that will be working with the United States.

"Along with my colleagues in Congress, I look forward to working with President-elect Lai and Vice President-elect Hsiao for the economic and security priorities that Taiwan and the United States share," said Radewagen, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, including vice chairman of its Subcommittee on the Indo-Pacific. "Democratically elected leadership and constitutional representative governments are always essential to freedom, and Taiwan's elections are another example in the region. Taiwan is an important economic partnership with the U.S. and other Pacific nations, and I've enjoyed multiple visits to their beautiful island, meeting with officials and seeing their wonderful culture. Congratulations to the people of Taiwan and we welcome their ongoing friendship with the people of the United States." ***(PR)***



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) in Taiwan with Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA) in 2022.

Radewagen highlights Korean American Day

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Council of Korean Americans Gala.

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Vice Chair Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) is highlighting Korean American Day (Jan. 13), which commemorates the day in 1903 that Korean immigrants arrived to become Americans, and celebrates today's Korean American community.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The gala honoring the lifetime achievements of South Korean business leader Sunny K. Park.

"I join our nation's Korean American community in celebrating this day," said Congresswoman Aumua Amata. "It's a joy to work with several Korean American colleagues in Congress, part of the diverse strength that represents all Americans in our nation's Capitol. The 1903 arrival of the first known Korean Americans correlates closely in time with American Samoa joining the United States (Tutuila in 1900 and Manu'a in 1904). Together, we are blessed to be part of a great and free country, that works in close alliance with South Korea. It's wonderful to consider the importance of many Korean Americans to the U.S. in every possible field of business, government, military, arts, and music, contributing to the country's future and taking part in the American dream for generations. Thank you to our Korean American friends and neighbors as we celebrate this milestone with you. God bless you and God bless the United States." ***(PR)***

GRMC offers condolences in the loss of Peter R. Sgro Jr.

DEDEDO, Guam—On behalf of the Guam Regional Medical City family of over 800 employees, GRMC offers its condolences to the Sgro family on the passing of Peter R. Sgro Jr.

Sgro Jr.

Sgro was one of the founders of the Guam Healthcare and Hospital Development Foundation in 2008 with the goal of attracting an investor to build a private hospital on the island. Sgro and his local foundation members, who were all volunteers, confronted many challenges along the way, but in 2009, they helped convince The Medical City to begin exploring the opportunity to expand to Guam. In November 2011, TMC broke ground on a property in Dededo that would evolve into what is now known as GRMC Hospital, and on July 15, 2015, GRMC opened its doors to the public. During the grand opening ceremony Sgro and his foundation members were recognized for their contribution in helping make the new hospital a reality. Since then, GRMC has added more than 130 inpatient beds and many specialty care services that were never before available on Guam, greatly reducing the need for residents to travel off island for treatment.

GRMC has tremendous gratitude for Sgro's passion for healthcare and improving the lives of the people of Guam and his legacy as a healthcare visionary will long be remembered.

"Peter, may you rest in peace," the GRMC board said. ***(PR)***

GRMC to reinstate mask mandate, revised visitation by Jan. 15

DEDEDO, Guam—In response to the recent increase in COVID-19 cases within our community, Guam Regional Medical City will reinstate a temporary mask mandate and limited visitation effective Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, to Friday, Feb. 16, 2024. This mandate may be extended based on developments in the facility and our community.

Mandatory mask usage will apply to all individuals entering GRMC. Masks must be tightly fitted, covering both the nose and mouth completely with no gaps. Security personnel will provide face masks to visitors and patients upon entering. Those with respiratory symptoms or fever will not be permitted to enter the hospital.

Limited visitation guidelines are as follows:

- Visitors for the following patient care areas are limited to one visitor per patient:
  - Med-Telemetry
  - Med-Surgical
  - Emergency Department
  - Comfort Care patients are limited to five visitors at a time.
- Intensive Care Unit patients are permitted two visitors during the hours of 9am-10am, 10am-11am, 1pm-2pm, 2pm-3pm, 8pm-9pm. No switching.
- Outpatient appointments and procedures are permitted one companion.
- Morgue viewings will continue to have no visitation limit for two hours.

GRMC strongly encourages the practice of proper hygiene practices, social distancing, and vigilance in preventing the spread of COVID-19. We thank the community for their cooperation as we implement these safety measures for our patients, visitors, and staff. ***(PR)***

USCG Guam experiencing temporary radio communication disruption

SANTA RITA, Guam—U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam advises the public the Joint Rescue SubCenter is currently experiencing an interruption in receiving communications over VHF-FM radio via the Rescue 21 towers, Jan. 12, 2024.

This disruption is an unintended consequence of a routine and pre-planned router relocation to enhance our operational capabilities.

During the shift, watchstanders transferred the guard to listen to the VHF-FM communications to colleagues in Hawaii, similar to the precautions taken during Typhoon Mawar. However, upon transferring listening back to watchstanders, it was determined neither watchstanders in Guam nor Hawaii could not hear traffic on VHF-FM.

The Rescue 21, the advanced maritime computing, command, control, and communication system designed to locate mariners in distress efficiently, is not fully operational. Technicians are diligently working to resolve the issue.

However, at this time, there is yet to be an estimated time for the return to full operational service. This outage does not impact the effectiveness of SARSAT alerts. The Search And Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking system, a critical component of the international Cospas-Sarsat Program, continues functioning efficiently.

This satellite-based system detects and distributes distress alerts from 406MHz beacons, providing accurate and timely location data crucial for search and rescue operations. Through this uninterrupted and reliable system, the JRSC remains fully capable of receiving and responding to 406 MHz distress signals from mariners, aviators, and individuals in remote areas.

The Rescue 21 system, a cornerstone of maritime safety, was installed in Guam as part of the nationwide initial phase of installations completed in 2015.

This system, known for its robustness, reliability, and capability, significantly enhances the Coast Guard's ability to respond to maritime emergencies.

With this system, boaters equipped with digital-selective calling can transmit automated distress signals, including vessel location, by pressing a button. The U.S. Coast Guard operates Remote Fixed Facilities or towers in Guam, Rota, and Saipan. VHF-FM radio communication plays a vital role in maritime safety.

Therefore, the U.S. Coast Guard is committed to restoring this service as swiftly and safely as possible. In the interim, the Service urges mariners to exercise additional caution and utilize alternative communication methods for distress alerts.

"Ensuring the safety of all our waterway users is our top priority," said Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir, public affairs officer for U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam.

"While we resolve the current VHF-FM radio communication issue, we strongly advise all mariners and waterway users to be prepared with multiple means of communication when heading out to sea. The ocean is unpredictable, and having redundant systems in place is crucial in safeguarding against unforeseen challenges at any time. We are dedicated to resolving this issue promptly and appreciate the cooperation and vigilance of the maritime community during this period."

As more information becomes available, additional updates will be provided. For maritime emergencies watchstanders can be reached by phone at (671) 355-4824. More information about the Rescue 21 system is available at https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/OurOrganization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Acquisitions-CG-9/Programs/C4ISR-Programs/Rescue-21/.

The U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam team focuses on maritime safety, security, and stewardship in Oceania. With a primary presence in Guam and Saipan and over 300 members across Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the team maintains a strong U.S. presence in the Micronesia subregion and adjacent areas, closely tied to local communities. ***(USCG)***

Navy undersecretary meets with Guam acting governor

ASAN, Guam—Under Secretary of the Navy Erik Raven met with Guam's acting governor Joshua F. Tenorio last Jan. 10 at the governor's office in Adelup, Guam.

The two leaders discussed the importance of the Indo-Pacific region. They also talked about regional stability and security, military presence on Guam, and economic prosperity.

They both emphasized Guam is a strategic hub and a valued partner of choice.

Raven thanked Tenorio for his support to the Navy and Marine Corps and noted that service members, Department of Defense civilians and their families are proud to call Guam home.

US NAVY

Under Secretary of the Navy Erik Raven meets with Guam acting governor Joshua Tenorio during a visit to Guam, Jan. 10.

The undersecretary expressed the Department of Navy's commitment and continued investments to the Indo-Pacific region, while also talking about the importance of military efforts to defend America's interests and those of our allies and partners.

Following their meeting, Raven will visit defense facilities and speak with military leaders and service members. He will also meet with several Guamanian civilian community leaders to listen and talk about the importance of the region and role of the military during this era of strategic competition.

Raven will depart Guam in Jan. 11 and then travel to Hawaii to meet with senior military leaders and speak with sailors and Marines.

The Department of Navy looks forward to continuing to enhance our presence, partnership and power projection capabilities of the U.S. military in the Indo-Pacific. ***(PR)***

US NAVY

Under Secretary of the Navy Erik Raven is traveling to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility to meet with military leaders, government officials, community leaders, and service members to discuss the importance of regional security and stability and defense of American interests, as well as allies and partners.

US NAVY

Under Secretary of the Navy Erik Raven thanked Guam acting governor Joshua Tenorio for his support to the Navy and Marine Corps and noted that service members, Department of Defense civilians and their families are proud to call Guam home.

Midgett returns to home port after a 129-day Alaska patrol

HONOLULU, Hawaii—The U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Midgett* (WMSL 757) and crew completed a 129-day deployment that included readiness training in and around southern California and 50 days on patrol in the Bering Sea, before returning to their home port in Honolulu.

The *Midgett* played a role projecting U.S. influence and protecting the nation's interests as the only U.S. maritime military service operating consistently in the Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea, and Arctic Ocean.

Midgett and its crew implemented the Coast Guard's Arctic Strategic Outlook objectives within the Seventeenth Coast Guard District area of responsibility, enforced fishery laws in a $13.9-billion Alaskan fishing industry, and maintained a continuous search and rescue guard amidst harsh winter weather. The crew completed 10 federal fisheries boardings and ensured adherence to federal laws and regulations while fostering a collaborative partnership with the Alaskan fishing fleet.

The crew focused on multiple community relations events with the City of Unalaska for District 17's "Kids Don't Float" outreach program, which included a tour of *Midgett* for 54 students from the local elementary school. The crew also took time teaching 200 students initial actions for cold water immersion, life jacket laws, how to determine the best type and fit, and the appropriate life jackets for different situations.

The *Midgett* is a 418-foot Legend-Class National Security Cutter that conducts search and rescue, fisheries law enforcement, maritime homeland security, and defense missions. The Midgett has been homeported in Honolulu since 2019. ***(USCG)***

USCG

The *Midgett* is a 418-foot Legend-Class National Security Cutter that conducts search and rescue, fisheries law enforcement, maritime homeland security, and defense missions.

USCG

Families welcome back home the crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Midgett* (WMSL 757).

USCG

The crew of the *Midgett* completed 10 federal fisheries boardings and ensured adherence to federal laws and regulations while fostering a collaborative partnership with the Alaskan fishing fleet.

Opinion

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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Congress is poised for a rare workforce breakthrough

A deal struck by Republicans and Democrats in Congress has paved the way for students to use federal grants for short training courses. This is a rare example of sensible, bipartisan policy. As a new year begins, leaders of both parties should work to pass the legislation—together with a better plan to pay for it.

The Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act would expand the range of programs eligible for Pell Grants, which are currently used by roughly 6 million undergraduates to help pay for college. The bill allows students, for the first time, to use this aid for programs as short as eight weeks. These are typically courses that train students in specialized skills, in fields ranging from welding to truck driving to health care. The beneficiaries would be low- and middle-income adults seeking to change careers or gain credentials for higher-paying jobs.

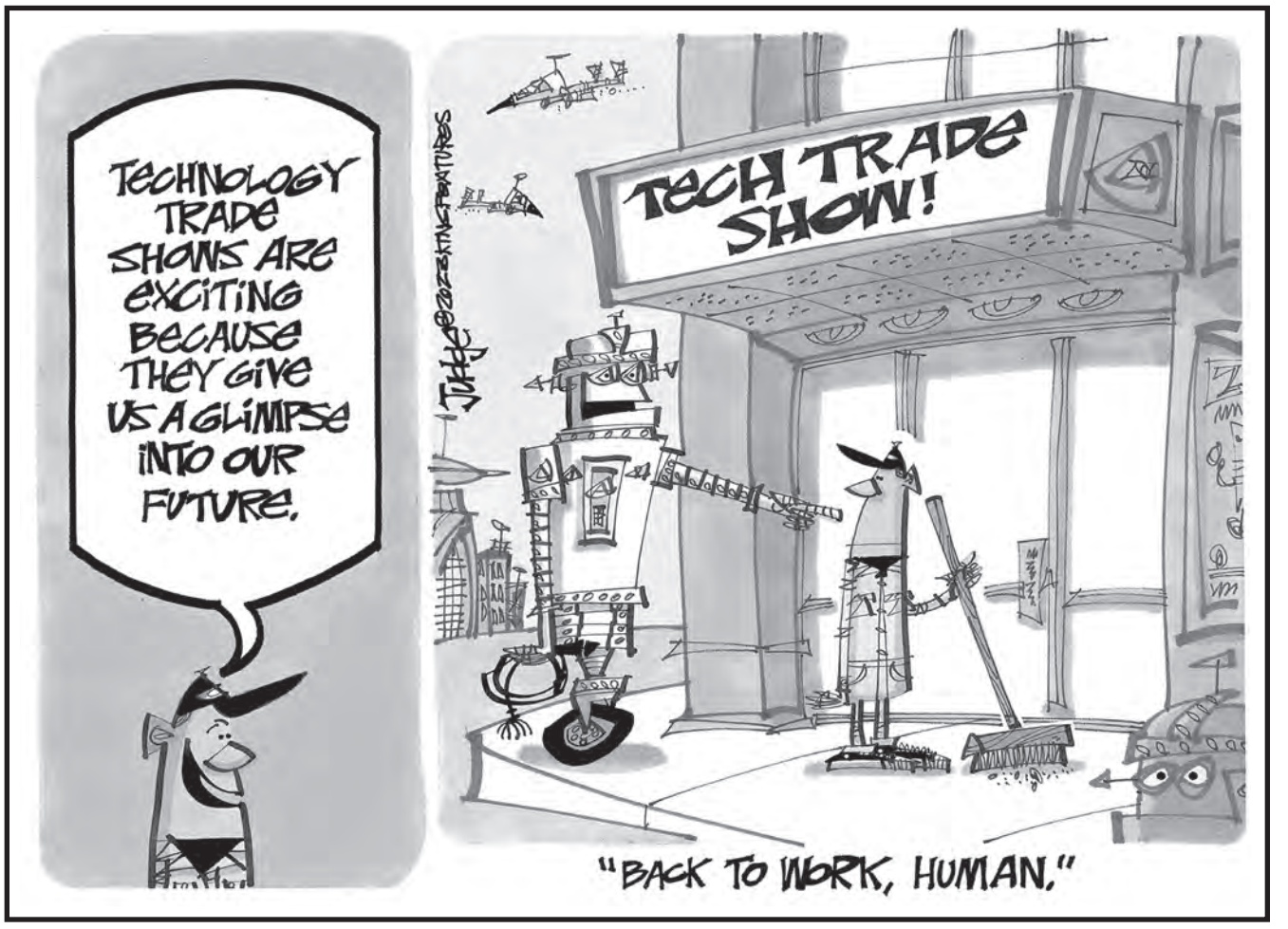
Up to now, the idea of expanding Pell Grants to shorter courses has failed over concerns about sending taxpayer dollars to low-quality providers. The framework negotiated by the House Committee on Education and the Workforce's Republican chair, Virginia Foxx, and ranking Democrat Bobby Scott addresses this by requiring that all programs demonstrate a completion and job placement rate of at least 70%, with graduates earning a median income of at least $21,870 plus the cost of tuition within one year. Eligibility would be limited only to training courses offered by accredited higher-education institutions, a priority for Democrats, but those institutions could include for-profit and online providers, as Republicans have advocated.

Committee members backed the compromise last month by 37-8—greatly boosting its chances of attracting broad support in both houses of Congress. Considering the legislative impotence of the current Congress, that's one reason for lawmakers to make it a top priority as they return to Washington. Beyond demonstrating that bipartisanship isn't dead, it would also help more low-income Americans obtain practical, career-advancing credentials at a time when employers face shortages of qualified workers and confidence in traditional higher education has plummeted.

In one respect, though, the plan can and should be improved. The measure is projected to cost a modest $160 million over five years. The committee wants to offset this by banning institutions with endowments larger than $500,000 per student from receiving federal student-loan money—a policy that would affect roughly 50 to 60 of the country's wealthiest schools. This would harm students by preventing them from using aid they're eligible for at the school of their choice—and might actually cost money rather than save it, because undergraduates who enroll in selective institutions are also the most likely to finish their degrees and pay back their loans in full.

Lawmakers are right to seek cuts in the bloated student-loan system to fund short-term training, but there are better ways to go about it. Capping the size of graduate-school and parent PLUS loans and streamlining the government's public-service loan forgiveness program would be fairer, simpler and far more economical.

See CONGRESS on Page 9



There's still time to grab control of the global thermostat

By MARK GONGLOFF
Bloomberg Opinion

Mark Gongloff is a Bloomberg Opinion *editor and columnist covering climate change. He previously worked for* Fortune.com*, the* Huffington Post*, and the* Wall Street Journal.

In 2015, in what seemed at the time like a triumph for humanity, the world's leaders set a stretch goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial averages. Not even nine years later, you could be forgiven for thinking they've failed.

The good news is that they haven't failed just yet. The bad news is that they're rapidly running out of time.

Thanks mainly to our unquenchable thirst for fossil fuels, global surface temperatures were just a smidgen below 1.5C above preindustrial averages in 2023, the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Center reported on Tuesday—1.48C to be exact. The strong El Niño weather pattern currently in the East Pacific is temporarily heating things up a bit, which means the planet will likely be even hotter in 2024. Copernicus suggests we could well see more than 1.5C of warming next year.

You're probably about as sick of reading last year's unhappy superlatives as I am of typing them, but one last time:

- It was the warmest year since at least 1850 and probably since roughly 125,000 BCE.
- Between June and December, each month was the hottest one of its kind on record.
- July and August were the hottest months on record, full stop.
- Last summer was the hottest season on record.

All of this contributed to heat waves across China, Europe and the US, wildfires in Canada and Greece, drought in Africa, flooding in Libya and Vermont, the deaths of Florida corals and more. In the midst of all this, global leaders meeting in Dubai last fall could make only vague promises about quitting the fossil fuels at the root of the problem.

> The problem with stretch goals is that they often don't work without a track record of success and a lot of extra capacity lying around. When it comes to fighting global warming, humanity has little of either.

They still clung to the shreds of the warming goals they'd set in Paris in 2015—2C as the primary target but still hoping for 1.5C if all goes well. And with more concerted effort beginning eight years ago, 1.5C might have been reachable. Now even 2C is starting to look like a stretch. In fact, current policies have us on track for something more like 2.7C of warming.

The stretch-goal concept, sometimes attributed to Jack Welch, the former chief executive officer of General Electric Co., but with roots in former President John F. Kennedy's moonshot, imagines that setting seemingly impossible goals can drive people or organizations to do great things. The problem with stretch goals is that they often don't work without a track record of success and a lot of extra capacity lying around. When it comes to fighting global warming, humanity has little of either. We're still burning more fossil fuel than ever with no sign of breaking the habit in the near future, as my Bloomberg Opinion colleague Javier Blas notes.

"The 1.5°C global warming ceiling has been passed for all practical purposes," former NASA scientist James Hansen wrote recently. He warns the global temperature anomaly could hit 1.7C next year.

But Hansen also thinks warming is accelerating, a controversial take that has divided scientists, as my Bloomberg Opinion colleague Lara Williams has written. And two years of 1.5C of warming would not guarantee failure. Given that the Paris goals are based on long-term averages, it will be another decade before we know for sure.

In the meantime, no matter how hopeless it might look, we must keep striving for the stretch goal, because every tenth of a degree of heating we avoid will save countless lives and untold billions of dollars in economic losses. Warming of 1.7C is still better than 2C, which is way, way better than 2.7C, and so on.

We must act with far more urgency, though. According to a study by Imperial College London, the world has less than a decade of emissions left in its "carbon budget" before the chance of holding at 1.5C is lost forever. Not one country is doing enough to avoid this fate, according to the nonprofit-backed Climate Action Tracker. Your typical corporate leader wouldn't stand for such lackadaisical efforts to meet stretch goals, and neither should we.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

How can the US renew Mideast peace talks? Recognize Palestinian statehood

BY JOSH PAUL
Los Angeles Times

Josh Paul was, until recently, a director in the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs.

On Sept. 13, 1993, with a famous handshake on the White House lawn, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat sealed the Oslo accords, which have, in theory, provided the theoretical and practical basis for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process ever since: a set of measures and confidence-building steps that would ultimately lead to a two-state solution.

Thirty years later, it is time to acknowledge that Oslo has failed. One can assign plenty of blame for this to all parties involved. Israel's vast expansion of settlements in the West Bank violated its pledge that the "integrity and status" of the occupied territories would be preserved. Palestinian leadership fell into a pattern of corruption and mismanagement. And the U.S. and the international community didn't hold both sides accountable.

As Israel's bombardment on the Gaza Strip continues, it's hard to think of what comes next. But we should radically reimagine the peace process and flip the script of Oslo. The first step? U.S. recognition of Palestinian statehood.

The root cause of Oslo's failure—other than the ill will of those who never wanted to see it succeed, of whom there are many—is its basic structure. Although intended as an interim agreement that would last no more than five years, its expiration was premised on "permanent status negotiations" that would resolve issues including"Jerusalem, settlements, [Israeli] military locations, Palestinian refugees, borders, foreign relations and Israelis" in Palestinian territory. None of those issues has been resolved. One key reason for this is the fundamental imbalance between Israel's status as a nation-state that gets to decide its own aims and actions, and the PLO's status as the representative of an occupied people with little capacity beyond day-to-day governance of a shrinking territory.

As a result of Oslo's plan for a Palestinian state, the Palestinian Authority was created as an interim body to oversee parts of the occupied territories. But it has relied on the Israeli government for its existence—often serving as an extension of the Israeli security apparatus— and was never seen as credible or legitimate by its own people.

Meanwhile, there was the growth of Israeli right-wing politics, signified by the broad adoption of the nomenclature "Judea and Samaria" to refer to the West Bank, as though it comprises provinces of Israel, and the extended leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose Likud Party's founding charter states that"between the Sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty." All of this forever postponed the possibility of permanent status negotiations, as well as the Palestinian state that Oslo anticipated.

To correct this imbalance and set the Israeli-Palestinian peace process back on course, a fundamental paradigm shift is needed. The U.S. should recognize Palestinian statehood and endorse a Palestinian membership application in the United Nations Security Council. This change would set the ground for permanent status negotiations between Israel and Palestine, not as a set of concessions between the occupier and the occupied, but between two entities that are equal in the eyes of international law. Disputes, such as over the status of Jerusalem or control over borders, water rights and airwaves, can be settled through established global arbitration mechanisms, including the International Court of Justice, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Telecommunication Union.

Of course, this would not be an easy path. The United States would need to continue as a guarantor-in-principle of Israeli security, and other international support, particularly from the Arab world, would be vital. Discussions would likely require politically contentious approaches to looming questions, such as the presence of Israeli settlements within the West Bank. (One solution might involve the dismantlement of lesser settlements and leasing of major settlement blocs to Israel on a 25-year basis, akin to the agreement between the U.K. and China over Hong Kong.) Most of all, this would also require the reemergence of a consensus and representative government for Palestinians that carries a monopoly on the use of force to the exclusion of any militias or unassociated forces, and though there are some signs this may be possible, it too will be hard.

But as challenging as this route may be, it is clear that the current strategy is not working. For as long as Palestinian statehood is conditional on metrics—such as those set in the Oslo accords for Israeli military withdrawal based on "the assumption of responsibility for public order and internal security by the Palestinian police force"—whose achievement is subject to the judgment of the Israeli government, and for as long as Israel can set the terms and shape the realities on the ground within the West Bank and Gaza, the existing political process will never be capable of delivering a just and lasting peace.

That is not to say, however, that two states, as envisioned by Oslo, are the solution. It is far from clear what form of a Palestinian state can be viable at this point—either in the West Bank given the expansive Israeli settlement networks, or in Gaza given the destruction wreaked by the Israeli military operation. And any solution will require resolving the tensions within Palestinian politics between the objectives of governance and resistance.

These factors, combined with the absence of trust in Israeli and Palestinian society—accumulated under Oslo and crystallized since Oct. 7—suggest, however, that significant change is needed to facilitate onward progress. A one-state solution, or a confederation of some sort, may prove more viable in the long term. But the Palestinian national aspiration cannot be put on hold amid Israel's increasingly dysfunctional politics.

Oslo was designed to provide security to Israel and statehood to Palestine; it has done neither. It is time to shed old ways. Rather than a path to statehood that starts with negotiations, it is time for a path to negotiations that starts with statehood.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

An MLK Day reality check special

What Dr. King he did was historic as he not only changed America but he even changed most of the world and today is "a day on, not a day off" to promote his dream of racial equality for all people of color. The reality is the CNMI would look and be very different had it not been for Dr. King! The Civil Rights Movement was not just about Blacks but about all the people of color, which included the local population of Chamorros and Carolinians who would have gone to Black schools with me back in the day and be called the N-word.

MLK Day is not just for Black folks and it is my sincere hope and prayer that this day will one day be truly celebrated islandwide on the beaches or wherever people can gather in celebration because the Civil Rights Movement was for all people of color, especially the local people who benefited from the end result of the movement, which was the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The work and struggles of Dr. King and those in the Civil Rights Movement shouldn't be forgotten and certainly shouldn't be taken for granted as it's still a day-on to keep his dream alive. There are many locals with African-American blood streaming through their families going back to the time when the first African whalers jumped ship in the 1800s, never to go back after seeing the beautiful long-haired women on the island of Saipan, so know and even honor your history, your ancestors and your family ties of today.

I am humbly and respectfully asking that every person, especially those of color, to try to do something to honor and commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on this day in the future, if it's just a day on the beach. It shouldn't be up to Ambrose or any small group because this day is about most of the people in the CNMI, especially those who appreciate and honor their American identity as a Chamorro-American, Carolinian-American, Palauan-American, Filipino-American, Chuukese-American and other American people of color here.

But I must offer my sincere kudos and thanks to Joeten—a great man whom I truly wish I got a chance to know—and his Joeten stores and family for being one of, if not the only business, that has continuously recognized MLK Day, so visit Joeten and take advantage of their sale. Thanks, Joeten. In the U.S. mainland there are all kinds of MLK Day races, cook-outs, sales and events that are even sponsored by city and municipal governments. The reality is our government, MVA, and the hotels do nothing for MLK Day, even though many locals do appreciate Dr. King. It's been left up to a handful of Blacks on island, which needs to change. I can only pray that one day, it will be the same in the CNMI with MLK Day celebrations among the businesses and among the people on Luta, Tinian, and Saipan. Every person of color needs to own MLK Day and recognize the man who gave his life so that you could live your life on a more equal and level playing field because Dr. King made life a great deal better for all people of color in America and even throughout the world. My only question is: "Who will renew the MLK Day celebrations "and "If not now then when," which is the same question I remember Dr. King posed in 1968 to me and others in the Memphis Chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, challenging us to be real activist for the cause of equality, which I still honor today. We (the people who marched with Dr. King) are becoming an extinct breed and it's time to pass the torch.

I'm also not just concerned with MLK Day, but there is Black History Month next and I'm wondering if the newspaper is going to voluntarily publish the events that recognize the only race in America for an entire month. Then there is Juneteenth coming, so someone must pick up these banners and carry the batons. I'm now 73 and it's time for someone else to step up to the challenge to lead and organize celebrations on these all-important days. As my late great friend, Dr. Joyner, might say on this occasion, "Show Dr. King some love, CNMI." So, I say again to all people of color in the CNMI, if not you (especially our leaders), then who and if not now, then when will you honor and thank Dr. King?

Happy MLK Day, CNMI, and please don't forget the reality that Dr. King dedicated and gave his life for you (all people of color) to be treated equally in America and even throughout the world.

Ambrose M. Bennett
Kagman III, Saipan

CONGRESS

From page 8

The bipartisan push to help lower-income Americans gain skills and get ahead was a bright spot in an otherwise dismal legislative session. In 2024, Congress should use that momentum and deliver.

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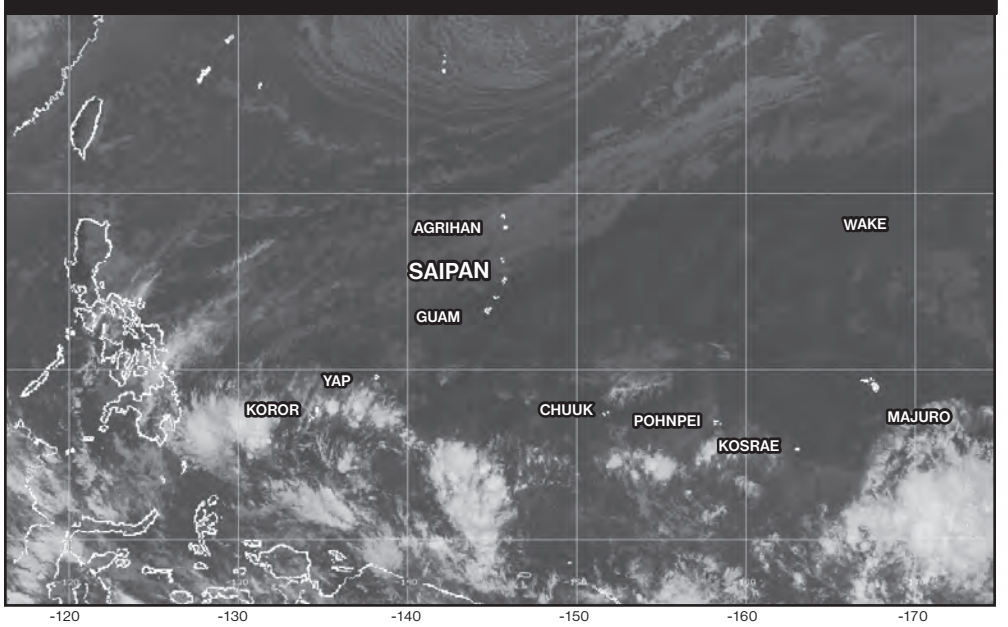
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Mostly sunny. Isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Windy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Windy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Windy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
87 78°	87 78°	87 78°	87 78°	87 78°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:28 AM SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows fair weather prevails over the forecast zones this morning. Cloudiness associated with a nearly-stationary Shear Line remains just north of the Saipan Coastal Waters. Surface winds this morning are moderate. Saipan Buoy shows combined seas near 7 feet at 10-12 second peak period, mostly from the northwest. Ipan buoy shows combined seas 5 to 7 feet mainly from east-southeast.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	85° / 77°
Palau	Cloudy	84° / 78°
Yap	Cloudy	84° / 78°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85° / 81°
Pohnpei	Cloudy	85° / 80°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	84° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:05 PM
Tuesday	6:46 AM	6:06 PM
Wednesday	6:46 AM	6:06 PM
Thursday	6:46 AM	6:07 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:08 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	9:52 AM	9:58 PM	-
Tuesday	10:34 AM	10:55 PM	-
Wednesday	11:14 AM	11:50 PM	-
Thursday	11:54 AM	-	-
Friday	-	12:46 AM	12:36 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Mostly Sunny	76° / 63°
Beijing	Sunny	46° / 20°
Hong Kong	Cloudy	63° / 56°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	82° / 69°
London	Rain	50° / 42°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	75° / 53°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	85° / 74°
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 59°
Miami	Cloudy	76° / 64°
New York	Mostly Sunny	45° / 34°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	50° / 41°
Paris	Showers	50° / 46°
Busan	Sunny/Wind	53° / 31°
Rome	Sunny	53° / 36°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	53° / 31°
San Francisco	Mostly Cloudy	58° / 44°
Seoul	Mostly Cloudy	47° / 17°
Tokyo	Sunny	52° / 34°
Washington, DC	Sunny	51° / 31°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY	FEET	
4:23 AM	Low Tide	-0.57
11:20 AM	High Tide	1.83
5:10 PM	Low Tide	0.88
10:02 PM	High Tide	1.67

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Slowing inflation suggests Biden's policies helping, but American voters still hurting

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden can make an increasingly strong case that he's helped fix inflation—if only he can get voters to believe him.

Figures issued this past week reflected a historic level of progress on battling high prices, hinting that inflation could be near the Federal Reserve's 2% target around the time of November's election. The consumer price index posted an an annual increase of 3.4%, but the prices charged by the producers of goods and services rose a meager 1% over the past year.

Current and former aides say Biden is eager to do more to bring down inflation, after a price surge in 2021 and 2022 crushed his public approval ratings in a way that is dragging down his reelection efforts. They see reasons for optimism with improving consumer sentiment.

"It's an ongoing effort," said White House chief of staff Jeff Zients. "Under his leadership, we've attacked inflation from every angle."

The question is whether voters are feeling the improvement and will reward Biden. Or will they penalize him because inflation became a problem on his watch as the U.S. emerged from pandemic shutdowns? The answer could hinge on how people feel about the costs of necessities such as gasoline and eggs.

AP

President Joe Biden speaks in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, Oct. 4, 2023, in Washington.

Biden can accurately say his policies helped reduce the average price of a dozen eggs to $2.51, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That is down from a peak last year of $4.82. But Republicans can counter that a dozen eggs cost $1.47 before Biden became president.

Leading GOP lawmakers such as Rep. Jason Smith of Missouri, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, greeted the latest inflation numbers as evidence that voters are still suffering from high prices: "President Biden's inflation crisis continues to rob the wallets of working families," he said.

Former President Donald Trump has told supporters that the inflation under Biden is how "countries die" and that Trump's return to the White House would mean lower energy costs.

"Drill, baby, drill," Trump said in a video posted on social media. "We're going to bring your electric prices way down. We're going to bring your energy prices way down. Gasoline will be back to $2, and maybe even less than that."

Federal data show that average gas prices did fall below $2 a gallon during Trump's presidency. But that was in early 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic, when schools and businesses were shuttered, sending the U.S. economy into shock as millions lost their jobs. A historic wave of federal government borrowing steadied the U.S. economy during the deadly pandemic.

In 2021, Biden inherited an economy trapped by uncertainty about the pandemic's path. He signed a $1.9 trillion aid package, a sum that Republicans and some economists say triggered the upward scramble of inflation, with the consumer price index registering a four-decade high of 9.1% in June 2022.

Past and current Biden administration officials say the decline in inflation since then was a result of a set of choices. Biden gave the Federal Reserve the political space to increase interest rates. He buttressed supply chains and helped stabilize gas prices. At the same time, the historic burst of job growth under Biden has continued. Outside economists said that would be impossible if inflation were to fall.

Starting with Biden himself, the White House rejected the conventional wisdom that millions of workers might need to lose their jobs to cool demand and ease inflation.

"The president was really focused on using every tool that we had to bring prices down without taking a hatchet to the labor market," said Bharat Ramamurti, a former deputy director of the White House National Economic Council.

US intensifies oversight of Boeing, will begin production audits after latest mishap

The Federal Aviation Administration says it will increase oversight of Boeing and audit production of the 737 Max 9 jetliner after a panel blew off an Alaska Airlines plane in midflight last week, the latest in a string of mishaps at the troubled aircraft maker.

The FAA said Friday that it would judge whether Boeing and its parts suppliers followed approved quality procedures.

Amid reports of continued manufacturing problems, the FAA also said it's reconsidering a longstanding practice of relying on employees at aircraft manufacturers to perform some safety analysis of planes. Members of Congress criticized the practice of deputizing Boeing employees as inspectors after two deadly crashes involving Boeing 737 Max 8 planes in 2018 and 2019.

"It is time to re-examine the delegation of authority and assess any associated safety risks," said new FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker. "The FAA is exploring the use of an independent third party to oversee Boeing's inspections and its quality system."

Whitaker suggested that the FAA might find "a technical, nonprofit organization" to help oversee Boeing's work. The agency also said it will increase monitoring of problems reported on Max 9 flights.

He told CNBC Friday that the FAA will also step up its oversight of Spirit AeroSystems, which supplies Boeing with fuselages for the 737 Max.

"We know there are problems with manufacturing, there have been problems in the past, but these are continuing," Whitaker said. "This is a brand-new aircraft, it has just come off the line and it had significant problems, and we believe there are other manufacturing problems."

In a statement, Arlington, Virginia-based Boeing said it will cooperate with the FAA. "We support all actions that strengthen quality and safety, and we are taking actions across our production system," the company said.

Spirit also said it's supporting the FAA actions. "Spirit's top priorities are quality, product integrity and compliance," a company statement said.

The FAA's intensifying focus on safety at Boeing comes just a day after the agency announced an investigation into whether the manufacturer failed to make sure a fuselage panel that blew off was safe and manufactured to meet the design that regulators approved.

The National Transportation Safety Board is focusing its investigation on plugs used to fill spots for extra doors when those exits are not required for safety reasons on Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliners.

One of two door plugs on an Alaska Max 9 blew out shortly after the plane took off from Portland, Oregon, a week ago, leaving a hole in the plane. The cabin lost pressure and the plane was forced to descend rapidly and return to Portland for an emergency landing. No serious injuries were reported.

Whitaker said the FAA in the past used to do a lot more aircraft-manufacturing inspections, but legislation moved those to the private sector. Sometimes that works, but at times it doesn't. The third party, he said, is just an option. "It may not be the right option, but I think we need to have that debate."

Legislators criticized the designated inspector program after the Max crashes overseas, contending the inspectors were still paid by Boeing and beholden to the company, not the FAA.

But in 2019, then-acting FAA administrator Dan Elwell said replacing the use of company workers for safety-certification work would require the agency to add 10,000 employees at a cost of $1.8 billion a year. That all but ended consideration of FAA doing the work.

Criticism of the inspector program resumed Friday after the FAA's actions were announced. "It should not have taken a near catastrophe for the FAA to review its use of the (designated inspector) program, which effectively lets the fox guard the hen house," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut.

Former congressman Peter DeFazio, who chaired the House committee that investigated the Max crashes, said Friday that the FAA's actions are needed to rein in quality and safety problems at Boeing. ***(AP)***

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Quaker Oats expands recall of granola bars and cereals for salmonella risk

The Quaker Oats Company has added two dozen additional types of granola bars, cereals and snack foods to a December recall over possible salmonella contamination. The company, which is owned by PepsiCo., announced the additional recall in the U.S. and Canada on Thursday. The expanded recall includes Quaker Chewy Granola Bars and Cereals, Cap'n Crunch Bars and select cereals, Gamesa Marias Cereal, Gatorade Peanut Butter Chocolate Protein Bars, Munchies Munch Mix and snack boxes that contain those products. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has received at least 24 reports of adverse events related to the products initially recalled, but no illnesses have been confirmed to be linked to the foods, an agency spokesperson said Friday. Adverse events can include medical problems, but also complaints about off taste or color of a product, defective packaging or other non-medical issues, the official said. FDA will continue to investigate the reports. Salmonella infections can cause fever, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and stomach pain. In rare cases, the bacterial infections can be fatal. ***(AP)***

Banks upbeat on US consumer despite bank profit declines, inflation and rising debt levels

NEW YORK (AP)—The biggest banks in the country posted strong profits last year, helped by higher interest rates and a strong economy, despite having to deal with the lingering industry costs of last year's banking crisis that caused the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank. All the banks had one-time charges in their quarterly results, many of them specifically related to their own businesses, making this quarter particularly messy. But setting aside the turbulence of the banking panic and the charges, the banks had a mostly strong 2023. They benefitted from by a resilient job market, U.S. consumers who, despite inflation, continued to spend and not fall behind on their debts, and higher interest rates that have boosted revenue across the industry. JPMorgan Chase said Friday that its profits dropped 15% in the fourth quarter, despite the bank reporting record quarterly revenue. JPMorgan's profits fell because it was required to pay $2.9 billion to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. as part of an industrywide, one-time special assessment by the regulator to cover the $16.7 billion in costs to cover the uninsured depositors caught up in the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank. Other banks like Citi and BofA are paying this assessment as well. With that aside, JPMorgan brought in an eye-popping $50 billion in profits last year, up from $37.6 billion in profits in 2022. Revenue at the largest bank in the country was nearly $160 billion. On a per-share basis, JPMorgan posted a profit of $3.04 a share, which was less than what analysts expected, but forecasts this quarter were thrown off by these one-time charges.

Nation

AS SHUTDOWN LOOMS:

Congressional leaders ready stopgap bill to extend gov't funding to March

WASHINGTON (AP)—Congressional leaders are preparing a stopgap bill to keep the federal government running into March and avoid a partial shutdown next week.

The temporary measure will run to March 1 for some federal agencies whose approved funds are set to run out Friday and extend the remainder of government operations to March 8. That's according to a person familiar with the situation and granted anonymity to discuss it.

The stopgap bill, expected to be released Sunday, would come as House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has been under pressure from his hard-right flank in recent days to jettison a recent bipartisan spending deal with Senate Democrats. The bill would need Democratic support to pass the narrowly divided House.

AP

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., heads to the chamber at the Capitol in Washington, Friday, Jan. 12, 2024.

Johnson insisted Friday that he is sticking with the deal he struck with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., despite pressure from some conservatives to renegotiate. Moderates in the party had urged him to stay the course.

Still, in his first big test as the new leader, he has yet to show how he will quell the revolt from his right flank that ousted his predecessor.

"Our top-line agreement remains," Johnson said Friday, referring to the budget accord reached Jan. 7.

That accord sets $1.66 trillion in spending for the next fiscal year, with $886 billion of the tally going to defense.

Hard-right members have criticized the deal, including several of those who helped oust former Speaker Kevin McCarthy from the speaker's office last year after he struck a spending deal with Democrats and President Joe Biden. Some have already raised the threat of a motion to oust Johnson over the deal, not even three months after he was elected.

The hard-right flank is also insisting that new immigration policies be included, which they say would stop the record flow of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Johnson met with about two dozen House Republicans this past week, many of them centrist-leaning voices urging him not to go back on his word and stick with the deal. The centrists assured Johnson they have his back.

"I just can't imagine the House wants to relive the madness," said Rep. French Hill, R-Ark., who had helped McCarthy negotiate the initial agreement with Biden and the other leaders.

Biden admin asks Supreme Court to tell Texas to stop blocking US border agents from patrols

McALLEN, Texas (AP)—The Justice Department on Friday asked the Supreme Court to order Texas to stop blocking Border Patrol agents from a portion of the U.S.-Mexico border where large numbers of migrants have crossed in recent months, setting up another showdown between Republican Gov. Greg Abbott and the Biden administration over immigration enforcement.

The request comes after Texas put up fencing to take control of a nearly 50-acre (20-hectare) public park along the Rio Grande in Eagle Pass, which was a crossing point for thousands of migrants entering from Mexico last year. Although a similar power struggle played out in the same region more than a year ago, the area Texas closed off this week prevents federal agents from accessing a larger and more visible crossing spot.

Along one stretch, armed Texas National Guard members and their vehicles are preventing Border Patrol agents from accessing the river, the Justice Department said in court filing. The Texas National Guard also allegedly used a military Humvee to keep Border Patrol agents off an access road.

"Because Border Patrol can no longer access or view this stretch of the border, Texas has effectively prevented Border Patrol from monitoring the border," the Justice Department wrote in a filing.

Abbott told reporters that Texas has the authority to control access to any geographic location in the state.

"That authority is being asserted," Abbott said.

The closure of Shelby Park was an escalation of the governor's border enforcement efforts known as Operation Lone Star. The state and federal government are involved in multiple legal disputes over actions Texas has taken since 2023, including the use of buoys in the middle of the international river, the installment of razor wire, and an upcoming law that will allow police to arrest migrants.

Abbott defended closing off the park as he faced backlash from Democrats for telling conservative radio host Dana Loesch last week that Texas has done everything to curb illegal crossings short of shooting people. Loesch had asked Abbott how far Texas could go on the border before someone might arrest him.

"The only thing that we're not doing is we're not shooting people who come across the border because of course the Biden administration would charge us with murder," he said as he discussed a New York City lawsuit against charter bus companies that he has used to transport migrants from Texas.

Mexico's foreign relations secretary denounced Abbott's comments, saying they could lead to violence and are dehumanizing to migrants.

On Friday, Abbott said he was making a distinction of what Texas can and cannot do on the border. "I was asked to point out where the line is drawn about what would be illegal and I pointed out something that is obviously illegal," he said.

Texas notified the Eagle Pass government on Wednesday that the Department of Public Safety would be closing public access to Shelby Park.

Concern grew when Border Patrol noted it, too, lost access to the park, which agents use to launch boats into the Rio Grande. The area also served as a staging area where federal officers would take migrants into custody and process them. The Border Patrol's access to the site for surveillance was similarly curtailed.

The Justice Department's emergency request to the Supreme Court says agents no longer have access to a 2.5-mile (4-kilometer) stretch of the border in the region. The filing was made as part of the U.S. government's lawsuit over the concertina wire the state installed along roughly 30 miles (48 kilometers) near Eagle Pass.

The union for Border Patrol agents, the National Border Patrol Council, praised the state's move.

"By taking control of an area where so many illegal aliens are simply surrendering, he's freeing up BP agents to patrol areas with high numbers of illegal aliens who attempt to escape arrest," the union said in a message on X, formerly known as Twitter.

In 2022, a Texas pecan farm got caught in a similar dispute between Abbott and the Biden administration when the Texas Department of Public Safety moved in without the landowner's consent and revoked a lease between the landowner and Border Patrol.

The state's policies have been called into question not only by outside critics but internally when a trooper's account over denying water and urgent medical care made headlines in July.

ACROSS THE NATION

War in Gaza, US election factor into some of many events planned for MLK holiday

As communities nationwide celebrate the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday this weekend with events ranging from parades to prayer services, some people are taking a cue from the slain civil rights icon's history of protest to demonstrate against the war in Gaza and draw attention to the looming U.S. presidential election. The Monday holiday also marks 100 days since Oct. 7, when Hamas launched an attack in southern Israel that killed some 1,200 people and resulted in about 240 taken hostage. Since then, more than 100 Israelis remain kidnapped and more than 23,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's bombardment of Gaza, as global health organizations have warned of a worsening humanitarian crisis there. Perhaps the biggest organized event of the weekend in the U.S. was held in the nation's capital Saturday—the March on Washington for Gaza, co-hosted by the American Muslim Task Force on Palestine, comprising some of the largest Muslim organizations in the U.S., along with antiwar and racial justice groups. ***(AP)***

Biden says Austin still has his confidence, but not revealing hospitalization lapse in judgment

EMMAUS, Pennsylvania (AP)—President Joe Biden said Friday that it was a lapse in judgment for Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin not to tell him about his hospitalization last week, but he still has confidence in his Pentagon chief. Speaking to reporters as he toured local businesses outside Allentown, Pennsylvania, Biden said "yes" when asked if it was a lapse in judgment for Austin not to tell him about his condition. He replied, "I do," when asked if he still had confidence in Austin's leadership. Austin, 70, remains hospitalized as he is being treated for complications from prostate cancer surgery. His failure to disclose his hospitalization has been sharply criticized by members of both political parties and has led to some calls for his resignation.

A weekend of ferocious winter weather could see low-temperature records set in US heartland

O'FALLON, Mo. (AP)—Icy winter weather blanketed the U.S. on Saturday as a wave of Arctic storms threatened to break low-temperature records in the heartland, spread cold and snow from coast to coast and cast a chill over everything from football playoffs to presidential campaigns. As the three-day Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday weekend began, the weather forecast was a crazy quilt of color-coded advisories, from an ice storm warning in Oregon to a blizzard warning in the northern Plains to high wind warnings in New Mexico. "It's, overall, been a terrible, terrible winter. And it came out of nowhere — two days," Dan Abinana said as he surveyed a snowy Des Moines, Iowa. He moved to the state from Tanzania as a child years ago, but said "you never get used to the snow."

Asia

President-elect has steered Taiwan toward democracy

AP

Taiwanese Vice President Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, left, celebrates his victory with running mate Bi-khim Hsiao in Taipei, Taiwan, Saturday, Jan. 13, 2024.

» Also away from China

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—Lai Ching-te, Taiwan's president-elect, has vowed to safeguard the island's de-facto independence from China and further align it with other democracies.

Lai, 64, emerged victorious in the election Saturday on the island of 23 million people that China claims as its own. He is currently vice president with the Democratic Progressive Party, which has rejected China's sovereignty claims over Taiwan.

As he faced his supporters Saturday night, Lai vowed Taiwan would "continue to walk side by side with democracies from around the world."

"We are telling the international community that between democracy and authoritarianism, we will stand on the side of democracy," he said.

Lai has vowed to strengthen the island's defense and economy, which depends heavily on trade with China. He has also made an effort to soften his earlier stance as a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan independence."

At the same time, the new president has expressed desire to restart dialogue with China, which has refused to communicate with the island's leaders in recent years.

"We are ready and willing to engage to show more for the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Peace is priceless and war has no winners," he said earlier in the week.

His chances of success in talking to China, however, are close to null, analysts say.

"Beijing has repeatedly criticized not just DPP more broadly, but has actually criticized Lai Ching-te by name," said Wen-Ti Sung, a fellow with U.S. think tank Atlantic Council. "It's something that Beijing usually only does when they think there's very little chance of the two sides ever repairing ties."

Instead, Sung added, China will likely resort to a "maximum pressure campaign," including military and economic coercion.

As vice president, Lai helped promote Taiwan's interests internationally.

He stopped in New York and San Francisco on his way to Latin America in August in a move that was criticized by Beijing.

That visit was part of a diplomatic mission to Paraguay, one of a dozen countries that still maintains formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Many countries, including the U.S., formally recognize the People's Republic of China but maintain unofficial ties with Taiwan.

Lai said at the time that it was important to meet foreign counterparts to convey the message that Taiwan "persists in its democracy, human rights and freedom and actively takes part in international affairs."

Myanmar's military says it and ethnic guerrilla groups have agreed to an immediate cease-fire

BEIJING (AP)—Myanmar's military has reached a cease-fire agreement with an alliance of ethnic minority guerrilla groups it has been battling in the country's northeast, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Friday. Myanmar's military government confirmed the development, as did the ethnic alliance.

The agreement was brokered at talks mediated by China on Wednesday and Thursday in Kunming, a Chinese provincial capital about 400 kilometers (250 miles) from the border with Myanmar, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said.

"China hopes the relevant parties in Myanmar can conscientiously implement the agreement, exercise maximum restraint toward each other and solve the issues through dialogue and consultations," she said at a daily briefing in Beijing.

Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, the spokesperson of Myanmar's ruling military council, said in an audio note to journalists that the two sides had met in Kunming and after talks, agreed on a temporary cease-fire agreement.

"We will continue discussions We will continue to work for the strengthening of the cease-fire," Zaw Min Tun said.

A previous cease-fire pact reached in mid-December was not honored by either side.

Chinese spokesperson Mao said the military and the Three Brotherhood Alliance—which comprises the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Arakan Army—agreed to an immediate cease-fire, the disengaging of military personnel and the settlement of their disputes through negotiations.

"The two sides promised not to undermine the safety of Chinese people living in the border area and Chinese projects and personnel in Myanmar," she said.

The Three Brotherhood Alliance on Friday night issued a statement on the Telegram messaging platform detailing what it called the Haigeng Agreement, apparently named after the Kunming hotel where China has hosted cease-fire talks.

It said the cease-fire began Thursday at 9 p.m. local time and committed both sides to avoiding confrontations and employing dialogue to resolve disputes, especially regarding the use of arms.

World

In 100 days, Israel-Hamas war has transformed region

» Fighting shows no signs of ending

JERUSALEM (AP)—Sunday marks 100 days that Israel and Hamas have been at war.

The war already is the longest and deadliest between Israel and the Palestinians since Israel's establishment in 1948, and the fighting shows no signs of ending.

Israel declared war in response to Hamas' unprecedented cross-border attack on Oct. 7 in which the Islamic militant group killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 250 others hostage. It was the deadliest attack in Israel's history and the deadliest for Jews since the Holocaust.

Israel responded with weeks of intense airstrikes in Gaza before expanding the operation into a ground offensive. It says its goal is to crush Hamas and win the release of the more than 100 hostages still held by the group.

The offensive has wrought unprecedented destruction upon Gaza. But more than three months later, Hamas remains largely intact and hostages remain in captivity. The Israeli military says the war will stretch on throughout 2024.

Here are five takeaways from the first 100 days of a conflict that has upended the region.

ISRAEL WILL NEVER BE THE SAME

The Oct. 7 attack blindsided Israel and shattered the nation's faith in its leaders.

While the public has rallied behind the military's war effort, it remains deeply traumatized. The country seems to be reliving Oct. 7—when families were killed in their homes, partygoers gunned down at a music festival and children and older people abducted on motorcycles—every day.

Posters of the hostages who remain in Hamas captivity line public streets, and people wear T-shirts calling on leaders to "Bring Them Home."

Israeli news channels devote their broadcasts to round-the-clock coverage of the war. They broadcast nonstop tales of tragedy and heroism from Oct. 7, stories about hostages and their families, tearful funerals of soldiers killed in action and reports from Gaza by correspondents smiling alongside the troops.

There is little discussion or sympathy over the skyrocketing death toll and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. Plans for postwar Gaza are rarely mentioned.

One thing has remained constant. While chastened Israeli security officials have apologized and signaled that they will resign after the war, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remains firmly entrenched.

Despite a sharp drop in his public approval ratings, Netanyahu has resisted calls to apologize, step down or investigate his government's failings. Netanyahu, who has led the country for almost all of the past 15 years, says there will be a time for investigations after the war.

Historian Tom Segev said the war will shake the country for years, and perhaps generations, to come. He said the failures of Oct. 7 and the inability to bring the hostages home have fomented a widespread feeling of betrayal and lack of faith in the government.

"Israelis like their wars to go well. This war doesn't go so well," he said. "Lots of people have the feeling that something very, very deep is wrong here."

US, allies accuse Russia of using N. Korean missiles vs. Ukraine, violating UN sanctions

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The United States, Ukraine and six allies accused Russia on Wednesday of using North Korean ballistic missiles and launchers in a series of devastating aerial attacks against Ukraine, in violation of U.N. sanctions.

Their joint statement, issued ahead of a Security Council meeting on Ukraine, cited the use of North Korean weapons during waves of strikes on Dec. 30, Jan. 2 and Jan. 6 and said the violations increase suffering of the Ukrainian people, "support Russia's brutal war of aggression, and undermine the global nonproliferation regime."

The eight countries—also including France, the United Kingdom, Japan, Malta, South Korea and Slovenia—accused Russia of exploiting its position as a veto-wielding permanent member of the council and warned that "each violation makes the world a much more dangerous place."

At the council meeting, Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said the information came from U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby, but he said representatives of the Ukrainian air force "specifically said that Kyiv did not have any evidence of this fact."

Nebenzia accused Ukraine of using American and European weapons "to hit Christmas markets, residential buildings, women, the elderly and children" in the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukrainian border and elsewhere.

U.N. political chief Rosemary DiCarlo told the council that Ukraine has suffered some of the worst attacks since Russia's February 2022 invasion in recent weeks, with 69% of civilian casualties in the frontline regions of Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

Over the recent holiday period, she said, "Russian missiles and drones targeted numerous locations across the country," including the capital Kyiv and the western city of Lviv.

Between Dec. 29 and Jan. 2, the U.N. humanitarian office recorded 519 civilian casualties, DiCarlo said: 98 people killed and 423 injured. That includes 58 civilians killed and 158 injured on Dec. 29 in Russian drone and missile strikes across the country, "the highest number of civilian casualties in a single day in all of 2023," she said.

The following day, at least 24 civilians were reportedly killed and more than 100 others injured in strikes on Belgorod attributed to Ukraine, she said. Russia's Nebenzia said a Christmas market was hit.

"We unequivocally condemn all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, wherever they occur and whoever carries them out," DiCarlo said. "Such actions violate international humanitarian law and must cease immediately."

Health & Wellness

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

It is commonly thought that vaccines are mostly given during childhood. Not true at all. Adult vaccination plays a critical role in safeguarding adult health as well.

YOUR GUIDE TO ADULT VACCINATIONS:

Staying healthy throughout life

By TERI M. FLORES
Correspondent

It is commonly thought that vaccines are mostly given during childhood. Not true at all. Adult vaccination plays a critical role in safeguarding adult health as well.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advocates that adults continue to be vaccinated from certain diseases since the protection one gets from a vaccine taken as a child can wear off over time. Adults also face the risk of contracting illnesses because of one's age, job, lifestyle, travel patterns and existing health conditions. Being vaccinated eliminates the possibility of getting seriously ill from vaccine preventable illnesses such as hepatitis B, shingles, and COVID-19.

More importantly, adults who get sick will be unable to take care of their own families and responsibilities. Being vaccinated plays a major part in protecting one's health as well as the health of those around us since vaccines lower the chances of getting sick.

Vaccines boost the body's natural defenses, which lowers the chances of getting ill and even suffering from complications that may be fatal.

Beyond this, adult immunization contributes to herd immunity, reducing the overall transmission of infectious diseases in the community.

It is important to remember that vaccine recommendations may vary based on your age, health status, and travel plans. A healthcare provider will be able to help ensure that vaccines are up-to-date and they should also be relevant to the situation.

The CDC recommends getting vaccinated for several communicable diseases, one of them being the flu. People between the ages of 6 months and older are advised to get the yearly flu shot by the end of October since flu viruses typically spread in the fall and winter months.

The World Health Organization describes the seasonal flu as an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses that are common in all parts of the world. There are around a billion cases of seasonal influenza annually, including 3–5 million cases of severe illness.

Anyone can get have flu, but children and adults who are 65 years and older are typically at the most risk of developing severe complications from influenza. Pregnant women and those who have chronic medical conditions are at risk of severe complications. The best way to protect oneself from complications is by getting vaccinated.

The flu vaccine is recommended for adults starting at16 years old, those who are over 65 years old, and those who have chronic health conditions.

All adults should also get the Tdap/Td Vaccine (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis). While tetanus and diphtheria are rare both are deadly, while pertussis or whooping cough, a highly contagious respiratory tract infection common among children, can still occur in adults. Adults who have never received this vaccine are advised to get one. The vaccine can be administered anytime during the year. A follow-up shot of either a Td or Tdap shot is recommended after 10 years of the initial vaccination.

Shingles is a viral infection that causes painful rashes or blisters that occur anywhere on the body. It is caused by the Varicella zoster virus which is the same virus that causes chickenpox. For adults who are 50 years and older, the CDC recommends two doses of the shingles vaccine known as Shingrix to reduce the risk of developing this condition and to prevent severe complications.

The pneumococcal vaccine helps prevent the occurrence of pneumonia, meningitis, and even sepsis. This vaccine is recommended for adults over 65 and those with certain health conditions.

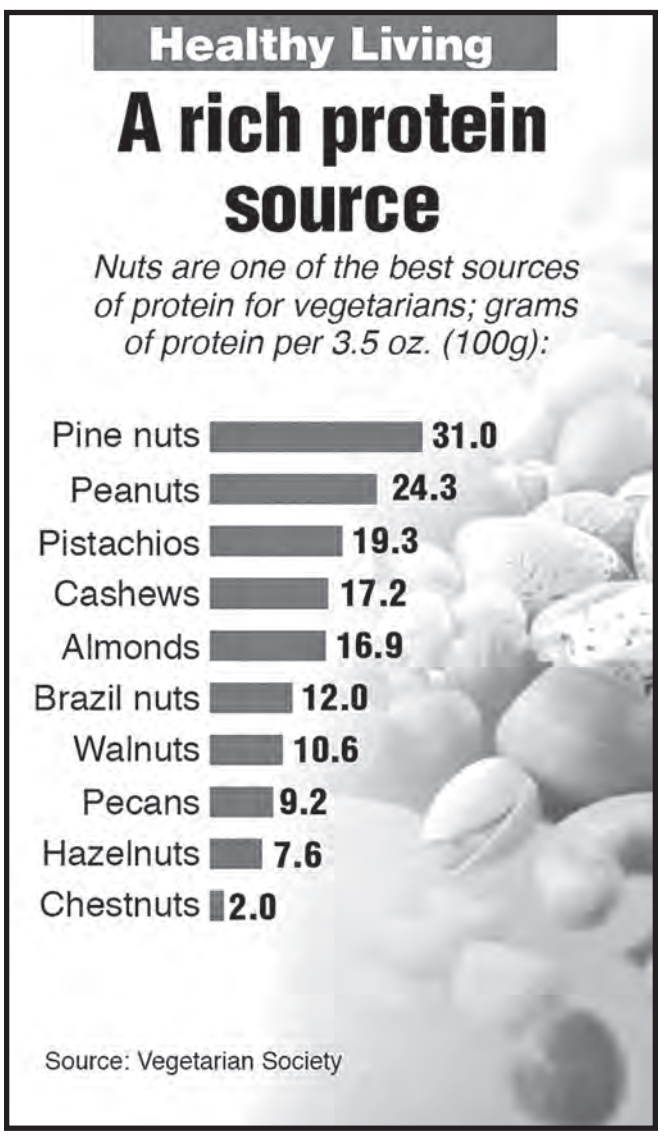
The HPV vaccine serves as a protection against the human papillomavirus, which can lead to various cancers in both men and women, among which is cervical cancer. The vaccine is recommended for adults up to age 45.

Adults who are at risk of Hepatitis B or Hepatitis A exposure should also be vaccinated. Hepatitis B can lead to chronic liver disease while Hepatitis A puts one at risk of cirrhosis and liver cancer. Vaccines offer protection against these potentially serious infections.

Public health experts also recommend that all adults who are qualified should get the COVID-19 vaccine to lessen the risk of severe illness and transmission of this deadly respiratory illness. COVID-19 vaccines have saved millions of lives since its introduction and provides strong protection from severe illness.

By staying current with recommended vaccinations, you not only protect yourself but also contribute to the well-being of your community. Adult immunizations are a vital component of maintaining good health throughout life. They help prevent serious diseases, protect vulnerable populations, and contribute to a healthier society. Don't overlook the importance of vaccines as you age; they remain a cornerstone of preventive healthcare.

Editor's Note:
This article was originally intended for publication as part of a health supplement in celebration of National Immunization Awareness Month in August.



How to jump-start your workout

By SONYA GOINS
Mayo Clinic News Network

Many people promise to exercise more in the new year, but jump-starting your workout routine can be challenging if you've been sitting on the couch for a while. It can seem like a daunting task.

Dr. Nathan LeBrasseur, director of the Robert and Arlene Kogod Center on Aging at Mayo Clinic, says it's never too late to get moving, even if you're an older adult.

Starting a workout program or being physically active takes motivation and commitment. The key is to start slowly and do something you take pleasure in.

"If you hate swimming, don't try to start to become a swimmer. But (if) you enjoy dancing or other activities (such as) gardening, those are forms of activity that once you engage in, you increase your consistency and compliance that will have the most health benefits," says Dr. LeBrasseur.

Being active can build muscle strength and improve cognitive and cardiovascular health.

"Three percent or 30 minutes a day of our waking hours, if we commit that to physical activity, will have huge benefits," explains Dr. LeBrasseur.

And for those young at heart, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week.

"As we get older, dedicating time, purposeful time, to getting some form of aerobic exercise or endurance exercise, like walking or cycling or swimming, and also getting some form of strength training is critically important," says Dr. LeBrasseur.

Tips to get started and stick with a workout plan:

- Research workout routines.
- Schedule your workouts.
- Find an exercise buddy.
- Be consistent.

MAYO CLINIC MINUTE

Cervical cancer screening

By SONYA GOINS
Mayo Clinic News Network

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. Each year, more than 11,000 new cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Many women often don't show any signs of cervical cancer in the early stages of the disease. In advanced stages, symptoms may include vaginal bleeding, pelvic pain or pain during intercourse.

Dr. Kristina Butler, a Mayo Clinic gynecologic oncologist, explains why preventive screenings are crucial.

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that develops in the cells of the cervix. Women who have been exposed to HPV are most at risk. Routine Pap smears or HPV screenings can help detect precancerous cells.

"We recommend cervical cancer screening start at age 21 for most women and continue thereafter about every three to five years, depending on the type of screening that's performed. Annual pelvic exams are offered in the years a Pap smear is not due," says Dr. Butler.

Cervical cancer screening recommendations for older women

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that women receive a Pap smear until age 65.

"We do know that 16% of cervical cancers happen in women above the age of 65," says Dr. Butler.

She says it's important for women with high risk factors or postmenopausal women to continue regular screenings.

"Particularly if a woman has abnormal bleeding, or any bleeding after menopause, it's very relevant to be evaluated," explains Dr. Butler.

Practicing safe sex and getting the HPV vaccine can reduce your risk of cervical cancer. People can get vaccinated between the ages of 9 and 45.

Life & Style

Denmark to proclaim a new king as Queen Margrethe abdicates

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP)—Thousands of people will gather in downtown Copenhagen on Sunday to witness a historic moment in one of the world's oldest monarchies.

Around 2 p.m. (1300 GMT), Queen Margrethe II will sign her abdication and about an hour later her eldest son will be proclaimed King Frederik X on the balcony of Christiansborg Palace in the heart of the Danish capital.

Margrethe, 83, will become the first Danish monarch to voluntarily relinquish the throne in nearly 900 years.

She will formally sign her abdication at a state council—a meeting with the Danish Cabinet—which automatically makes the crown prince, 55-year-old Frederik, Denmark's new monarch.

AP

From left, Queen Margrethe, Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary receive the diplomatic corps in occasion of the New Year at Christiansborg Palace, Copenhagen, Denmark, Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024.

Citing health issues, Margrethe announced on New Year's Eve that she would step down, stunning a nation that had expected her to live out her days on the throne, as is tradition in the Danish monarchy.

Margrethe underwent major back surgery last February and didn't return to work until April.

Even Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen was unaware of the queen's intentions until right before the announcement. Margrethe had informed Frederik and his younger brother Joachim just three days earlier, the Berlingske newspaper wrote, citing the royal palace.

"The queen has been here and she has been on the throne for more than 50 years. And she is an extremely respected and popular figure, so people hadn't expected this and they were in shock," Danish royal expert Thomas Larsen said.

The last time a Danish monarch voluntarily resigned was in 1146, when King Erik III Lam stepped down to enter a monastery. Margrethe is abdicating 52 years on the day after she ascended the throne following the death of her father, King Frederik IX.

Denmark's monarchy traces its origins to 10th century Viking king Gorm the Old, making it the oldest in Europe and one of the oldest in the world. Today the royal family's duties are largely ceremonial.

Unlike in the UK, there is no coronation ceremony in Denmark. The prime minister will formally proclaim Frederik king from the balcony of Christiansborg Palace, which houses government offices, Parliament and the Supreme Court as well as the Royal Stables and Royal Reception Rooms. Thousands of Danes are expected to witness the proclamation from the square below.

The abdication will leave Denmark with two queens. Margrethe will keep her title while Frederik's Australian-born wife will become Queen Mary. Frederik and Mary's eldest son Christian, 18, will become crown prince and heir to the throne.

Moon landing, Beatles, MLK speech are among 75 biggest TV moments, out before 75th Emmys

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The moon landing, the Beatles' first appearance on American TV and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech are among the 75 Most Impactful Television Moments as ranked by the Television Academy before Monday's 75th edition of the Emmy Awards.

Academy members from the television industry collaborated with academics to cull eight decades of TV history and vote on the list that was revealed Friday. Atop it they put Apollo 11's 1969 first landing on the moon, and Neil Armstrong's declaration of a "giant leap for mankind." In second they put coverage of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, and in third the Beatles' 1964 appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

AP

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses marchers during his "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28, 1963, in Washington, D.C.

King's "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered at the March on Washington in 1963, is ranked No. 6. This year's Emmy Awards, delayed four months because of Hollywood's actors and writers strikes, comes on the MLK holiday.

While the top of the list is dominated by news events, plenty of fictional moments from classic TV dramas, comedies and specials appear too, including Hawkeye bidding farewell to best buddy B.J., and Korea, in the 1983 final episode of "M.A.S.H." (No. 8), Linus reciting the nativity story in 1965's "A Charlie Brown Christmas" (No. 14), and, from 2007, the much-debated, cut-to-black final moment of " The Sopranos " (No. 36).

Brunei's Prince Abdul Mateen weds fiancee in lavish 10-day ceremony

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Brunei's Prince Abdul Mateen, one of Asia's most popular royal figures, has married his fiancee in an elaborate 10-day ceremony.

The 32-year-old prince, once dubbed one of Asia's most eligible bachelors, married Anisha Rosnah Isa-Kalebic, 29, in a ceremony that began on Jan. 7 and will end on Tuesday. A solemnization ceremony was held at a mosque on Thursday.

Mateen is the fourth son and 10th child of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, one of the world's richest men. While sixth in line to the throne, the prince has gained prominence in recent years accompanying his father on diplomatic engagements.

The sultan announced the engagement in October of Mateen and Anisha, who is the granddaughter of the ruler's special advisor. Mateen, who plays polo and is a helicopter pilot in the Royal Brunei Air Force, has a 2.5 million-strong following on Instagram. Anisha reportedly owns a fashion brand and tourism business.

Sunday's main wedding reception at the 1,788-room palace will see an array of international royalty and dignitaries, along with a parade through the capital, Bandar Sri Begawan.

Widow discovers decades-old omission in man's obituary

DEAR ABBY: My husband died in a car accident 38 years ago. Until yesterday, I had never read his obituary. Our daughter and I were not mentioned in it! It was written by my father-in-law. I am very upset. I have no intention of informing my daughter about this discovery, as she loved her grandfather and has fond childhood memories of him.

I know I will, in time, forgive him for excluding me. But I'm finding it hard to forgive him for omitting her. Am I wrong to not tell her? What if she one day finds the obituary and sees we were left out? I know it will upset her. I don't know the right thing to do.

MYSTIFIED IN NEW YORK

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I work in a supermarket in which there are several managers. One female manager is very intimidating. She criticizes me and watches me like a hawk. Last week, she had me crying at home. My home life isn't very good either. My parent is suffering from dementia and keeps my sister and me up and down all night. Plus, I just had a milestone birthday, which only one co-worker remembered. I'm not the only one this manager intimidates. I am close to quitting or transferring to another store. What should I do?

UNHAPPY IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR MYSTIFIED: Obituaries are usually written during a time of great stress. Grieving families are not at their best and can be distracted not only by the pain of their loss, but also by the many details that must be attended to. Your husband's death must have been a terrible shock not only for you and your little girl, but also his father. Forgive him for the omission.

Because you would like to spare your daughter the pain you are experiencing, once you calm down, tell her you saw the obituary, that her grandfather loved you both and that he must have been in terrible emotional turmoil when he wrote it because it contains some "important omissions." Or write her an explanatory note, and attach it to the front of the clipping so she will read it first.

DEAR UNHAPPY: Accept that because you have a stressful home life, you may be more vulnerable at work. You and your sister should discuss your demented parent's nighttime wandering with their doctor and ask if there is a medical solution for the problem behavior. Another helpful resource would be the Alzheimer's Association (visit alz.org to find a chapter near you). Sometimes just sticking to a regular schedule can help to reduce anxiety and regulate the behavior of the affected person.

As to your problem with your female supervisor, if it is possible to transfer to another store and a less stressful environment, you should do that. If you like the job, then make that move.

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

■■■

DEAR READERS: Today, we remember the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who in 1968 was martyred in the cause of civil rights. His philosophy still rings true: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

LOVE, ABBY

■■■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

OK, THESE ARE MY FOOTPRINTS HERE I STOP, HEAR SOMETHING, AND START TO TURN AROUND.
A FEW FEET FARTHER ON, HERE'S THE IMPRESSION OF MY BODY AS I HIT THE GROUND. THESE ARE THE POWDERED REMAINS OF THE SNOWBALL THAT HIT ME.
FROM THE ANGLE OF PARTICLE DISPERSEMENT, WE CAN TELL THE SNOWBALL WAS THROWN FROM OVER HERE, WHERE WE FIND...
...TIGER TRACKS.
THOSE COULD BE ANYBODY'S TIGER TRACKS.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

HEY, NICK.
HEY, GUMBO.
WAIT. IS THIS WEIRD?
KIND OF. WE DON'T NORMALLY TALK OR STAND UP.
SOMEBODYS HAVING A DREAM SEQUENCE.
IF IT'S DAD, THIS COULD BE A WEIRD WEEK.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WELL, IT'S A NEW YEAR.
AND THIS YEAR, ENO CAMINO WILL MAKE GOOD CHOICES!
DO YOU REALIZE THE IRONY OF SAYING THAT WHILE TALKING TO THE MIRROR IN YOUR UNDERWEAR?

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

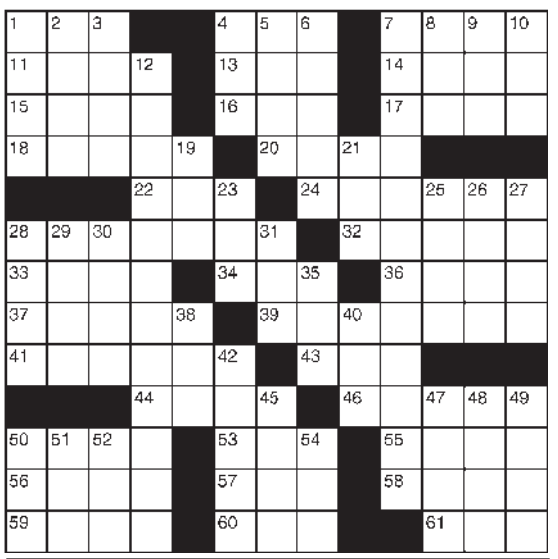
ACROSS
1 "Selma" director DuVernay
4 Brit. sports cars
7 Part of speech
11 Await approval
13 Ump's call
14 Elliptical
15 Elizabeth of "Jacob's Ladder"
16 Historic time
17 Fasting period
18 Cafeteria stack
20 Pakistani language
22 Sound of surprise
24 Had a hunch
28 Act
32 Subway entrance
33 Regrettably
34 Plead
36 Harrow rival
37 Hamelin musician
39 First Bible book
41 2017 World Series winners
43 Not 'neath
44 Cast a ballot
46 More broad
50 "Beloved" author Morrison
53 Eggs
55 Houston acronym
56 Actor Guinness
57 Documentarian Burns
58 Glitz partner
59 Apportion
60 Conclusion
61 "Uh-huh"

DOWN
1 Calendar entry (Abbr.)
2 Swerve
3 Writer Quindlen
4 "The Simpsons" bartender
5 Mentor
6 Big Dipper points
7 Activity carried out on a 12-Down
8 Night before
9 Raced
10 Diner order
12 Title for the federal holiday that honors Martin Luther King Jr.
19 HBO rival
21 — Moines
23 Globe
25 Poses
26 "The Time Machine" people
27 Cozy rooms
28 Haydn nickname
29 Yalies
30 Engrossed
31 Eldest March sister
35 Earth (Pref.)
38 Kanga's kid
40 Fresh
42 Feed the furnace
45 Tied
47 Actress Tyne
48 Jacob's brother
49 Wheelchair access
50 Highland hat
51 Yucatan "Bravo!"
52 Mosquito barrier
54 Moreover

Solution time: 21 mins.

D	I	S	C	S		R	A	M		M	A	C
A	R	I	A	L		E	G	G		E	A	R
M	A	N	L	Y		S	U	M	A	T	R	A
		A	M	F	I	I	A		I	O	O	N
B	A	T		R	O	N		A	L	O	N	G
T	A	R	T		A	S	I	D	E			
S	H	A	R	I	F		R	E	G	E	N	T
		E	L	S	I	E			E	L	B	E
G	R	E	B	E		M	N	O		A	A	A
E	I	R	E		D	E	L	P	E	N		
E	L	E	K	T	R	A		T	I	T	L	E
S	E	C		D	I	S		E	N	R	O	N
E	S	I		S	P	Y		D	E	A	L	I

Last Friday's Answer



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Dove Cameron, 28; Regina King, 53; Chad Lowe, 56; Mario Van Peebles, 67.

Happy Birthday: Pay attention to detail. How you manage money will influence your lifestyle and personal happiness. Refuse to let emotional situations escalate. When in doubt, ask questions, rely on facts and figures, and refuse to let gossip or someone's opinion mislead or cost you. Put your mind at ease and do the research necessary to ensure you make wise decisions, and everything else will fall into place. Your numbers are 8, 13, 20, 24, 32, 39, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Consider a revitalizing change. A new job, adventure or educational pursuit will be enticing. A transition is taking place and adjustments that make life easier can be implemented. Follow your heart and do what makes you happy. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Connect with people who impact your life, and pick up where you left off. Discussions will spark your imagination and give you plenty to consider moving forward. A change will provide a rush that stimulates your mind and enhances your life. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Stick to what you know and do best. Don't share personal information or make misleading gestures. You'll benefit the most if you focus on personal growth, meaningful relationships and taking care of financial, medical and legal matters that require updating. ✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Step outside your comfort zone and try something new. Let your imagination run wild, and you'll discover how to turn something you love doing into a lucrative or helpful pursuit. Connect with people who share your passion and see what happens. A partnership looks inviting. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Choose your battles wisely. Don't agree to participate in something that doesn't interest you. Attend an event geared toward self-improvement and learning skills that allow you to pursue your dreams and update your image to enhance your chance to advance. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Money spent on educational pursuits, equipment to increase productivity or taking advantage of an offer will pay off. Making a change will give you a new lease on life and encourage you to invest more time and money in your future. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Monitor what's happening around you. Avoid sparring with a friend, relative or colleague. Take pride in what you do, and spend more time conducting personal changes that make life easier and financially efficient. Don't share personal information or jeopardize your identity. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Stick close to home. You'll have the discipline to recycle and discard things you no longer need and sell some items to boost your bank account. A gesture you make will improve the dynamics of a relationship. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: A realistic attitude will help you avoid an emotional situation with a friend, relative or colleague. Set boundaries rather than expose your inner thoughts. Listen, observe and distance yourself from anyone looking for information to use against you. ✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Don't let an opportunity pass you by; knowing when to act and taking the initiative is how you'll get ahead. If you share your intentions before you launch your plan of attack, someone will take advantage of the information you volunteer. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: How you do things matters. Set a budget and use your imagination to turn your vision into something remarkable. Change doesn't have to be costly, but efficiency matters if you want to get your money's worth. Live up to your word and standards. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Don't believe everything you hear. Protect your name, ideas and position. Someone will use manipulation to disrupt your plans. Be quick to respond, and you'll maintain control. Your ability to see situations clearly will help you outmaneuver anyone who gets in your way. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are dedicated, wise and adaptable. You are productive and vibrant.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

7		1	3		8	6		4
		8	2					
	2		1		7			
	8	2	7	3	6	5		
1	6	5					3	
9	7		8				4	6
		6		8	3		9	2
2		7			9	3		
	3	9					5	

Difficulty: ★ 1/15

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

1	7	4	5	3	2	9	6	8
5	6	9	7	4	8	2	3	1
3	2	8	9	1	6	4	5	7
7	1	6	4	8	5	3	2	9
2	9	5	6	7	3	1	8	4
8	4	3	1	2	9	5	7	6
4	3	1	2	6	7	8	9	5
9	8	7	3	5	1	6	4	2
6	5	2	8	9	4	7	1	3

Difficulty: ★★★★ 1/12

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

YOGA PANTS Solution: 6 letters

S	H	A	P	E	E	L	B	A	H	T	A	E	R	B
Q	T	N	E	M	E	V	O	M	S	I	Z	E	I	S
U	R	R	I	B	B	E	D	S	P	E	V	K	E	N
A	A	U	I	H	E	A	T	A	R	E	E	A	S	U
T	I	N	N	P	T	P	T	U	R	G	M	T	T	G
H	N	N	O	O	E	T	T	S	N	L	H	H	N	N
G	I	I	L	R	E	S	I	I	E	G	N	L	I	I
I	N	N	Y	R	O	B	T	S	I	L	O	E	R	T
E	G	G	N	P	L	S	S	T	Ⓜ	O	E	T	P	T
W	S	S	T	E	A	O	H	Ⓨ	T	O	N	I	U	I
T	P	S	K	L	F	I	Ⓖ	M	E	S	H	C	M	F
H	I	I	G	T	C	L	O	O	C	E	I	S	R	M
G	H	N	S	K	I	N	E	V	I	T	C	A	A	R
I	O	U	T	F	I	T	T	U	O	K	R	O	W	O
L	U	L	U	L	E	M	O	N	O	I	H	S	A	F

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Active, Athletics, Bike, Breathable, Cool, Fashion, Form Fitting, Gym, Heat, Hike, Hips, Lightweight, Long-lasting, Loose, Lululemon, Mesh, Movement, Neon, Nylon, Outfit, Patterns, Posture, Prints, Reversible, Ribbed, Running, Seamless, Shape, Size, Skin, Snug, Soft, Squat, Stripes, Thick, Thin, Tights, Training, Waist, Warm-up, Workout

Last Friday's Answer: Cardholders

To purchase **WONDERWORD** books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Mahomes leads Chiefs to playoff win over Miami in near-record low temps

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—It was so cold that Patrick Mahomes' helmet shattered on a hit. Andy Reid's mustache froze on the sideline. Fans and players alike huddled for warmth, trying their best to grit their way through the fourth-coldest game in NFL history.

The Kansas City Chiefs managed to handle the adversity well.

Handled the Miami Dolphins quite well, too.

Mahomes threw for 262 yards, found Rashee Rice eight times for 130 yards and a touchdown, and made several daring runs for key first downs. Isiah Pacheco pounded over the frozen turf for 89 yards and another score. And the Chiefs shut down a prolific Miami offense in a 26-9 victory in the wild-card round of the playoffs Saturday night.

Harrison Butker added four field goals for the reigning Super Bowl champs, who appear to be warming up for another run.

"Guys came with that attitude, that mentality — we knew it was going to be cold," Mahomes said. "All week we were preaching, 'Let's come in there with that fire and just get after it and see what happens.'"

Meanwhile, the injury-depleted Dolphins (11-7) looked nothing like the dynamic offense that led the league in yards. Tua Tagovailoa was pressured relentlessly by the NFL's second-ranked defense, wide receiver Tyreek Hill had a 53-yard TD catch but was otherwise shut down in his return to Kansas City, and the Dolphins finished with 264 yards in all.

They have not won at Arrowhead Stadium since Nov. 6, 2011, nor won a playoff game since Dec. 30, 2000.

"All the weather," Reid said, "it's a little bit different than down in Miami."

The Chiefs won their 15th consecutive home playoff game, not counting a trio of Super Bowls that netted them two Lombardi Trophies. But they will head to Buffalo next week if the Bills beat the Steelers on Monday in a game pushed back a day by a blizzard. Otherwise, the Chiefs will host Houston, which beat the Browns earlier Saturday.

It was minus-4 degrees Fahrenheit (minus-20 Celsius) at kickoff, easily setting a record for the coldest game at Arrowhead Stadium. But it was wind gusts, whipping through at more than 25 mph and driving the wind chill to a bone-rattling minus-27 degrees, that made the weather truly miserable for just about everyone.

That included pop star Taylor Swift, who once again turned up to see her boyfriend, Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce.

She at least got to watch from an enclosed suite. Most fans huddled outside in parkas, ski goggles and snow pants, and players huddled around heaters on the sidelines as if they were an oasis in the cold. The National Weather Service issued a warning for what it called "dangerously cold" weather that had blanketed the Midwest.

In fact, the cold may have made Mahomes' helmet brittle enough that a hit in the third quarter knocked a chunk of the plastic shell from it. Once officials saw the fist-sized hole, they made Mahomes get a backup helmet from the bench.

"We have to talk about where we store the backup," Mahomes said. "It was like, frozen."

The weather didn't seem to bother Hill, who was playing in Kansas City for the first time since his old team traded him to Miami two years ago. The league's leading receiver warmed up in a short-sleeved shirt, then proceeded to scorch the stout Chiefs defense and All-Pro cornerback Trent McDuffie for a his long touchdown reception midway through the first half.

But the Dolphins' offense otherwise struggled, just as it did in a 21-14 loss to the Chiefs in their November game in Germany.

Kansas City was far more efficient, scoring on four of its six first-half drives. Mahomes capped the first with a TD toss to Rice, and while ensuing drives kept fizzling in the red zone, Butker added a trio of field goals to give Kansas City a 16-3 lead.

"That was like kicking a block of ice," Reid said.

The Chiefs added another field goal in the third quarter, but it was still a two-possession game early in the fourth when the Dolphins appeared to force another field goal. But a late flag on Christian Wilkins for roughing the passer on third down gave Kansas City a fresh set of downs, and Pacheco plowed into the end zone moments later to give the Chiefs a 26-7 lead.

The Dolphins finally put together a sustained drive afterward, but by that point it was much too late. And when they failed to convert on fourth down, they were headed to their 11th straight loss when the game-time temp is 40 degrees or less.

Far less, in this case.

AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) celebrates after throwing a touchdown pass during the first half of an NFL wild-card playoff football game against the Miami Dolphins Saturday, Jan. 13, 2024, in Kansas City, Mo.

TEXANS 45, BROWNS 14

HOUSTON (AP)—As the games get bigger, C.J. Stroud just keeps getting better.

The rookie became the youngest quarterback to win a playoff game after throwing for 274 yards and three touchdowns, and the Houston Texans returned two interceptions by Joe Flacco for scores in a 45-14 rout of the Cleveland Browns in a wild-card matchup Saturday.

"C.J. is the reason why we're in this position," coach DeMeco Ryans said. "He's special, a special young man. Special player. Continues to shine no matter how big the moment is.

"Our whole team is leaning on him and he has the shoulders to carry that weight."

Stroud, the second overall pick in the draft last April, is also the highest-drafted rookie QB to win in the postseason. He picked apart Cleveland's vaunted defense, throwing touchdown passes of 15 yards to Nico Collins, 76 to Brevin Jordan and 37 to Dalton Schultz.

"It's been a heck of a year and I thank God, I can just go another week with my teammates," Stroud said. "This is like a dream come true."

At 22 years and 102 days old, Stroud passed Michael Vick, who was 22 years, 192 days old in 2002 when his Falcons beat the Packers.

"I'm super blessed to be considered with a great name like Michael Vick, who was my favorite quarterback growing up," he said. "And hopefully I can make it two (wins)."

Stroud threw for 236 yards and three touchdowns before halftime as the Texans built a 24-14 lead. The defense took over after that, with Steven Nelson and Christian Harris returning interceptions for touchdowns on consecutive drives in the third quarter to extend the lead to 38-14.

"It was really, really big to put up 14 points on top of what C.J. was already doing," Nelson said. "That just put the icing on the cake for us."

With the Texans up 45-14 with nine minutes to go, Stroud's work was done, and he was replaced by Davis Mills.

It's the Browns' worst postseason loss since a 34-0 thumping by the Baltimore Colts on Dec. 29, 1968.

Houston is back in the playoffs for the first time since 2019, and Stroud's stellar play and the leadership of Ryans, who's in his first year, transformed the Texans (11-7) from NFL laughingstock to AFC South champions.

Flacco, who turns 39 on Tuesday, came off the couch to go 4-1 as a starter to end the regular season. He led the Browns (11-7) to just their third playoff appearance since their 1999 expansion rebirth, but second in four seasons under coach Kevin Stefanski.

"We picked a bad day to have a bad day," Stefanksi said. "That's all of us. That's players, coaches, offense, defense, special teams. Not good enough."

Playing in his 17th postseason game but first in nine years, Flacco couldn't continue his magical run under the bright lights of the playoffs.

"It's definitely a shame the way it went down and hard to deal with at the moment," Flacco said.

He finished with 307 yards and had a touchdown pass in the first half, but his mistakes under pressure in the third quarter were too much for the Browns to overcome on a day when Stroud easily outshined him in his playoff debut.

The previous highest-drafted rookie QB to win a postseason game was the New York Jets' Mark Sanchez, who was the fifth overall pick in 2009.

Cleveland's Deshaun Watson was under center for the Texans during their last playoff run but played just six games for the Browns this season before having season-ending shoulder surgery. He was on the sideline Saturday for just the second time since his surgery, watching the coming out party for the man who replaced him as Houston's franchise quarterback.

The sellout crowd was rowdy and ready for Houston's return to the postseason after three awful seasons where the team combined for just 11 wins. They chanted "MVP! MVP!" throughout the game when Stroud dropped back to pass.

Collins had six receptions for 96 yards and a touchdown, and Devin Singletary ran for 66 yards and a late score for Houston.

Kareem Hunt ran for a touchdown and had a TD reception in the first half, but had just 26 yards rushing.

The Browns took a 7-3 lead on Hunt's 1-yard run with about two minutes left in the first quarter.

Collins' 15-yard TD catch put the Texans back on top 10-7.

The Browns regained the lead on their next drive when Hunt grabbed a shovel pass from Flacco and ran 11 yards for a touchdown.

But the advantage would last only 10 seconds as Jordan grabbed a short pass and outran multiple defenders for a 76-yard touchdown to make it 17-14. It was Houston's longest play this season and the longest in franchise playoff history.

"I was a running back my whole life," Jordan said. "So I feel like that's one of those things that I really carry with me as a tight end."

Stroud's 37-yard TD pass to Schultz pushed the lead to 24-14 with about a minute left in the second quarter.

Flacco was hit by Derek Barnett as he threw and his pass was picked off by Nelson and returned 82 yards for a touchdown to make it 31-14 with about six minutes left in the third quarter.

The Browns went for it on fourth-and-2 on their next drive and Flacco was picked off again. This time, Harris returned it 36 yards for the score.

The Texans are the first team to return two interceptions for touchdowns in a game since Seattle did it against Washington on Jan. 5, 2008.

Celtics rout Rockets 145-113 to improve to 19-0 at home

BOSTON (AP)—Jayson Tatum had 27 points and eight rebounds before being ejected on back-to-back technical fouls and the Boston Celtics remained unbeaten at home with a 145-113 victory over former coach Ime Udoka and the Houston Rockets on Saturday night.

Jaylen Brown scored 32 points and the Celtics improved to 19-0 in the TD Garden – the first time in the history of the much-decorated franchise that it has opened a season with more than 17 wins in a row.

Cam Whitmore scored 22 points and Alperen Sengun had 19 points and 10 rebounds for Houston. The Rockets have lost three of their last four to drop their record to 19-19. They won just 22 games all last season.

Tatum was tossed for the second time in six weeks, picking up his first technical for complaining about a non-call with 10:17 left in the fourth quarter and Boston leading 117-90. He continued to complain while Aaron Holiday took the foul shot and picked up a second T, then walked over to referee CJ Washington and leaned in to shout something before walking off the court.

AP

Boston Celtics' Jaylen Brown (7) drives between Houston Rockets' Amen Thompson (1) and Alperen Sengun (28) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, Jan. 13, 2024, in Boston.

THUNDER 112, MAGIC 100

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 37 points and Oklahoma City beat short-handed Orlando to tie Minnesota for the Western Conference lead.

Gilgeous-Alexander had his high points total without making a 3-pointer. He missed all four of his 3-point tries, but was 13 of 16 inside the arc and made 11 of 12 free throws.

Jalen Williams scored 16 points and Chet Holmgren added 15 to help the Thunder improve to 27-11. Paolo Banchero had 20 points, nine rebounds and eight assists for the Magic. They have lost three straight.

JAZZ 133, LAKERS 123

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Lauri Markkanen had 29 points, nine rebounds and five assists to lead Utah past Los Angeles for its fifth straight victory and eighth in a row at home.

Collin Sexton scored 27 points and Jordan Clarkson added 21.

With LeBron James out with a left ankle injury, D'Angelo Russell led the Lakers with 39 points and eight assists. Anthony Davis had a triple-double with 15 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists, but shot 5 of 21 from the field.

BUCKS 129, WARRIORS 118

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 33 points and Milwaukee Used a big fourth quarter to pull away against short-handed Golden State.

The Warriors rested Stephen Curry in the second night of a road back-to-back and are still without Draymond Green. Coach Steve Kerr said he could return from his suspension Monday in Memphis or Wednesday at Utah.

Damian Lillard added 27 points for the Bucks. Jonathan Kuminga led the Warriors with 28.

KNICKS 106, GRIZZLIES 94

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Julius Randle had 24 points and 11 rebounds, OG Anunoby scored 18 points and New York beat makeshift Memphis.

Miles McBride, starting in place of the injured Jalen Brunson, added a career-high 19 points, along with six assists for the Knicks. They have won six of seven.

GG Jackson led the Grizzlies with 20 points and six rebounds. Over the last week, leading scorer Ja Morant had season-ending shoulder surgery, and Marcus Smart's injury to his right ring finger will keep him out at least six weeks. Then, Friday night in a loss to the Clippers, Desmond Bane, the team's second-leading scorer, sprained an ankle and was on crutches Saturday.

WIZARDS 127, HAWS 99

ATLANTA (AP)—Kyle Kuzma scored 29 points and Washington took advantage of Atlanta's worst offensive night this season to rout the Hawks.

Jordan Poole added 20 points to help the Wizards snap a six-game losing streak and improve to 4-18 on the road. It was their largest victory of the season.

Atlanta shot a season-low 34%. Trae Young had 21 points on 6-of-19 shooting.

BULLS 122, SPURS 116

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Nikola Vucevic had 24 points and 16 rebounds and Chicago overcame a career-high 30 points from Tre Jones to past San Antonio with Spurs rookie star Victor Wembanyama sitting out.

Wembanyama did not play the second game of a back-to-back. The Spurs continue to proceed cautiously with the No. 1 pick following a sprained ankle last month.

Keldon Johnson had 26 points for San Antonio.

PELICANS 118, MAVERICKS 108

DALLAS (AP)—Rookie Jordan Hawkins scored a season-high 34 points and New Orleans beat Dallas in a game in which most of both teams' regular starters weren't in uniform.

Herb Jones scored 15 points and Jonas Valanciunas had 14 points and a 12 rebounds for the Pelicans, who split a back-to-back after losing at Denver 125-113 on Friday night. Kyrie Irving led the Mavericks with 33 points.

NBA fines Toronto's Rajakovic $25K for comments blasting officiating after loss to Lakers

NEW YORK (AP)—Toronto coach Darko Rajakovic was fined $25,000 by the NBA on Thursday, two days after he ranted about officiating following his team's 132-131 loss to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Rajakovic took particular exception to how the Lakers got 23 free throws in the fourth quarter while the Raptors shot only two. The 21 free throw disparity was the largest for any quarter of an NBA game this season.

For the game, the Lakers took 36 free throws—14 by Anthony Davis alone—and the Raptors took only 13.

"What happened tonight, this is completely B.S.," Rajakovic said after that game, sometimes hitting the table where he was sitting for emphasis. "This is shame. Shame for the referees. Shame for the league to allow this. Twenty-three free throws for them, and we get two free throws in the fourth quarter?"

Rajakovic, the Raptors' first-year head coach, went on to call the game "not fair" and suggested that it wasn't the first time Toronto felt like it wasn't officiated on equal footing this season.

Toronto had given up the second-fewest free throws per game in the league entering Tuesday. Opponents averaged 19.5 foul shots this season against the Raptors going into that contest.

Further angering the Raptors: a call where Davis drew a foul on an RJ Barrett screen with 24.8 seconds left, on a play where Scottie Barnes hit a 3-pointer that would have tied the game. The Raptors argued that Davis flopped, to no avail.

"They had to win tonight? If that's the case, just let us know, so we don't show up for the game," Rajakovic said. "Just give them a win. But that was not fair tonight. And this is not happening first time for us."

The Raptors lost again in Los Angeles on Wednesday, falling 126-120 to the Clippers. Before the game, Rajakovic said the loss the night before was behind the team.

"I'm going to always stand up for my team and for my players and for my organization," he added.

Source: Clippers sign Leonard to 3-year extension worth $152.3M

LOS ANGELES (AP)—With the Los Angeles Clippers compiling one of their best rosters ever, Kawhi Leonard wanted to make sure the focus was on the quest for a first NBA Finals appearance in franchise history rather than his future.

So Leonard signed a three-year contract extension worth $152.3 million on Wednesday.

A person familiar with the agreement confirmed the value of the deal to The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because financial terms were not released.

"It was time to do it. I'm happy," Leonard said after he scored 29 points in the Clippers' 126-120 victory over the Toronto Raptors. "I'm just focused on the right now. I'm in a moment in this season of trying to get us to a place we haven't been before."

The two-time NBA Finals MVP is averaging 24.0 points, 6.0 rebounds and 3.5 assists in his 12th NBA season. The 32-year-old forward has been in good health, playing in 33 of 37 games so far. He recently returned after missing four games with a hip injury.

Lawrence Frank, the team's president of basketball operations, said there was never a doubt in his mind that an extension would be reached.

"It just made sense from both sides. We both wanted the same thing," Frank said. "We wanted Kawhi to be a Clipper for a long time and Kawhi wants to be a Clipper for a long time."

Leonard signed with the Clippers during the 2019 offseason after leading the Raptors to an NBA title. He was in the third year of a four-year deal he signed in 2021 that calls for him to earn a base salary of $45,640,084 this season. He had a player option for next season at $48,787,676.

"When you can get a top-tier player to sign back, it says a lot about your organization and all the work put in to to get to this position. It is a great day for the organization," coach Tyronn Lue said.

Leonard is a five-time All-Star and two-time Defensive Player of the Year. He also won an NBA title with San Antonio in 2014.

The Clippers are fourth in the West with a 24-13 record. Their 16-3 record since Dec. 1 is the best in the league as the core unit of Leonard, Paul George and Russell Westbrook has gelled with James Harden, who was acquired in a Nov. 1 trade with Philadelphia.

George, who arrived with Leonard in 2019, and Harden are also eligible for extensions. Frank said talks with George are still ongoing, but discussions with Harden can not begin until after the NBA Finals.

Lue said the addition of Harden has meant Leonard and George have run fewer pick-and-roll plays, which has helped decrease the amount of wear and tear on their bodies.

"I think James also has made it easier for Kawhi and Paul to have more catch-and-shoot 3-pointers and to play off closeouts. That's been really good for us," Lue said.

Italy's Davis Cup star Sinner wins opener; Sakkari relief

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Jannik Sinner had the Carota Boys in the crowd and red-white-and-green flags flying in Rod Laver Arena Sunday, helping Italy's Davis Cup star feel right at home in the opening match on the center court at the first 15-day Australian Open.

Sinner had a 6-4, 7-5, 6-3 first-round win over No. 59-ranked Botic van de Zandschulp, needing 2 1/2 hours to complete his first win since a memorable November when he twice beat Novak Djokovic and won the Davis Cup.

"Means a lot to me to start off with a win," fourth-seeded Sinner said in a post-match TV interview as a half-dozen fans dressed in carrot costumes cheered from the stands. "Physically I feel good. I'm here in good shape. I think I can be happy for today."

AP

Italy's Jannik Sinner reacts during his first round match against Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024.

Sinner said he was surprised to see the Carota Boys in the crowd.

"It's nice to see them in the stands," he said. "They are getting more famous than I am, slowly. Maybe this support gives me in the key moments this extra belief, maybe. Who knows? Let's see how it goes here. But I'm happy that they are here."

Another Italian, Matteo Arnaldi, beat Adam Walton 7-6 (5), 6-2, 6-4 in the first round. The first match to go the full five sets was won by Francisco Cerundolo, the 22nd-seeded Argentinian edging out Australian Sweeney 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 2-6, 6-2.

Marin Cilic, the runner-up in 2018, was beaten 6-1, 2-6, 6-2, 7-5 by Fabian Marozsan of Hungary.

The season's first major is being played over 15 days—the first round is split over three days—and starting on a Sunday for the time.

Women's eighth seed Maria Sakkari admitted her relief after she beat Nao Hibino of Japan 6-4, 6-1, her first Grand Slam win since last year's Australian Open.

"I lost three first rounds in my last three Grand Slams," she said. "For me, it was a very difficult match today emotionally. I'm happy I managed to do the job right and play a good second set."

Also advancing were 2021 U.S. Open finalist Leylah Fernandez, who beat 17-year-old Sara Bejlek 7-6 (5), 6-2 and No. 9 Barbora Krejcikova, who rallied from a set and a break down to beat Mai Hontama 2-6, 6-4, 6-3.

"It wasn't a perfect match, but I'm just glad that I was able to fight through some of the tough moments that I encountered in the first set and just kept fighting," said Fernandez, who had a first-round loss at last year's U.S. Open. "I think it was a good first round, get a feel of the court, get a feel of the tournament, and I can just improve from there."

Teenager Brenda Fruhvirtova recorded her first Grand Slam win, the 16-year-old Czech beating Anna Bogdan of Romania 2-6, 6-4, 6-3.

No. 28 Lesia Tsurenko had a 3-6, 7-5, 6-3 comeback win over Lucia Bronzetti and Russian qualifier Maria Timofeeva ousted veteran Frenchwoman Alize Cornet, 6-2, 6-4. Cornet was appearing in her 68th consecutive Grand Slam event, a women's record.

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every time by Llyanna Libut, while Eliane Pagaduan, Aiyana Fatialofa, and the rest of the team anticipated returns and digs as accurately as they could.

The Lady Knights tried to keep pace with the high soaring Lady Eagles—tying the second set up a few times with great saves and kills by Anjoelena Villagomez.

A few unanswerable serves by the Lady Knights allowed them to catch up, 8-8, but they were stumped at 12 points as GCA's Libut took it all the way home in her service, complemented by untouchable kills by Camacho.

The Lady Eagles included Libut, Fatialofa, Pagaduan, Camacho, Wylynn Pua, Guadalupe Villagomez, Sarah Lim, Keala Takeda, Breanna Lopez, Qihan Wang, and Jojo Yarofalir.

The Lady Knights, with Villagomez, consisted of Cassidee Flores, Aubrey Quitugua, Alexia Rubia, Mia Guerrero, Heather Sin, Miana Dela Cruz, Ciana Demapan, Janessa Arriola, Ava Sablan, Cali Cabrera, and Trisha Abuan.

First-time head coach was GCA alumnae Katriel Saures who shared she was proud of the team and their win. "They worked so hard. You can really see them putting in the work in each practice and I'm so proud. I'm so thankful for Mr. C. [Cesar Libut] for helping me out a lot with coaching, and I'd really love to continue doing it." Libut is an eight-time champion coach for GCA's high school volleyball team.

She said that in the finals, MCS "was really challenging. I really feel like the competitive level has really risen as time passed by and they're just such good competition. My team really worked hard. It really gave me motivation to do much more in practice," She added that the main strategy was defense, as "you have to prepare for any ball that comes your way and not just slack off."

LEIGH GASES

Three-time champions Grace Christian Academy Lady Eagles players Neveah Camacho and the rest of her teammates line up to congratulate Mount Carmel School on a great finals game of the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Girls Middle School Volleyball League 2023-2024 last Saturday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Asked how it is coaching instead of playing this time around, she said, "I guess you see how they're in your shoes at some point and you watch them grow. It feels rewarding, especially going back to the school that coached me as well since I was in sixth grade."

With the first year of coaching done, the Northern Marianas College student's next goal is to defend the title next season. There are, however, a few players that are promoting to high school next school year—Libut, Camacho, Pua, and Fatialofa.

Saures then thanked the players, supporters, and the coordinators of the league.

The Public School System Girls High School Volleyball League 2023-2024 was held with help from the Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association.

VISITOR

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was hard because of the humidity. "I still have a little problem with the humidity but it was nice, especially the flat [course]."

Hess said there were three or four of them running for the lead in the first 2K or 3K, but then he pulled away further and stayed in the lead.

Taflinger said after the race that it was a good one. "I've never ran in the Trinity before and so I really enjoyed it, doing a different race." She said she kept pace with Brennfleck, but at the second turnaround eventually passed her.

The Saipan International School 8th grader said that this is just her second 10K race, with the first being the Grotto 10K last year. She said that she likes 5Ks better as it's much shorter, but that 10Ks is something different.

She said she joined the Trinity race because her parents, Chad and Angela, joined last year (and this year), and said that it was fun, so she decided to join it as well.

Addalee said she dreads the Mt. Tapochao 5K as it's uphill, but that she'll just rest and hydrate before then.

Run Saipan is awarding the top male and female overall after the completion of all three races. There is no overall Top 3 this year, just the fastest accumulated for the fastest male and female runner.

Results of Day 2 at Mt. Tapochao (5K), and Day 3 at Marpi (5K) will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

LEIGH GASES

Some participants of the Beach Road Pathway 10K on Day 1 of the Run Saipan 2024 Trinity race last Saturday morning pose for a photo.

MHS

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handed MHS their second title in as many years.

The MVP was Omelau for scoring the first goal of the game and setting the tone for the rest of the finals.

The Golden Boot awardee for the most goals of the season was SSHS' Mark Patubo with eight goals.

Third place was Saipan Southern High School which defeated Mount Carmel School, 3-2, before the finals.

Along with Omelau and Bergancia, the Dolphins were made up of Terrell Hix-Kileleman, Isaiah Hossain, Mark Costales, Leland Deleon Guerrero, Paul Lizama, Zhi Xiang Lin, Wataru Kadokura, Andrew Sablan, Emerson Brillo, Cody Shimizu, Takeru Jim, and Rooney Gil.

MHS coach Don Marshall Cabrera said after the game that despite the short season, "We did our best to carry the same momentum that we had prior to the winter break over… it was a three-week break so we did our best to make sure that we didn't play too sloppy."

He credited the players for the championship and said that it felt great defending the title. He was also the winning coach last season.

With the finals against SIS, Cabrera said, "It was just one of those games. The ball is round—anything could happen. We had a really tough first half, but we had a really good team talk at halftime and we were able to pull it together and come up with the win."

He thanked the parents, players, the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association, and the PSS Athletics Program for another season.

Omelau, for his part, said he was not expecting the MVP award. On his goal, he said, "It was good. We had good spirits going into the game. It felt good scoring the first goal—it brought our confidence up." He said what was going on in his mind as the game unfolded was, "just shoot it."

The sophomore then thanked his teammates and his family for their support.

LEIGH GASES

Marianas High School's Tyler Omelau, second right, poses with the MVP trophy, while Saipan Southern High School's Mark Patubo poses with his Golden Boot trophy. They are joined by NMIFA executive committee member Alex Sablan, far right, NMIFA's executive director Russelle Zapanta, far left, and a Public School System representative, second left.

Mahomes leads Chiefs to playoff win over Miami in near-record low temps.

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Sports

Italy's Davis Cup star Sinner wins opener; Sakkari relief.

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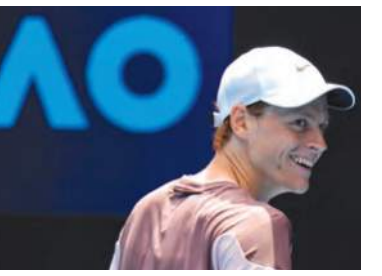

3-peat for GCA middle school v-ball team

LEIGH GASES

Three-time champions Grace Christian Academy Lady Eagles pose with their trophy and coaches Cesar Libut, far right, and Katriel Saures, standing fifth from left, along with second place Mount Carmel School Lady Knights during the awarding of the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Girls Middle School Volleyball League 2023-2024 last Saturday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Grace Christian Academy Lady Eagles' volleyball legacy continues strong and unmatched—not only in the high school level—but also in the middle school level, as its team has won three championships in a row in the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Girls Middle School Volleyball League.

In the 2023-2024 edition, it was a private school showdown as the undefeated Lady Eagles faced off against Mount Carmel School Lady Knights at the Marianas High School Gymnasium last Saturday.

The Lady Eagles, with their perfect record in the regular season and playoffs, awaited the winner of the third-place match between MCS and Hopwood Middle School, with the Lady Knights advancing.

However, fatigue was a determining factor in the finals against GCA as the Lady Knights did not have much chance to rest before the game, resulting in a quick, 21-16, 21-12 match.

The Lady Knights drew first blood in both sets, but the Lady Eagles had the final say.

Hard spiker Neveah Camacho was set up almost perfectly

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MHS blanks SIS to defend soccer title

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Marianas High School Dolphins blanked Saipan International School Geckos, 2-0, in the championship bout of the NMIFA-PSS Interscholastic Boys High School Soccer League 2023-2024 last Thursday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

The Dolphins defended their title with a more dominant and aggressive lineup stacked with national team pool players, which they used to their advantage against the championship-hungry Geckos.

The Geckos had chances at the goal from attempts by Casey Chambers, but missed closely in all instances. What made the difference was the Dolphins' more demanding pushes to the Geckos' goal, while the Geckos were held back by a tight MHS defense.

The first goal came in a quick hand off from a teammate to Tyler Omelau in the second half's 42nd minute, who kicked the ball in the right corner of the net while defended by SIS' William Sosa and Mark Chavez.

SIS' chances at tying the game up decreased with each second that drained from the huge game clock across the pitch, while MHS was on the hunt to lengthen the lead more before that could happen.

It seemed like it would be just one goal on the board, but MHS' Anthony Bergancia came through in the 58th minute and made it 2-0. SIS had no more fight in them as minutes turned into seconds and

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LEIGH GASES

Marianas High School boys soccer team poses for a photo during the awards ceremony of the NMIFA-PSS Interscholastic Boys High School Soccer League 2023-2024 last Thursday night at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

Visitor, student top Day 1 of Trinity race

By LEIGH GASES
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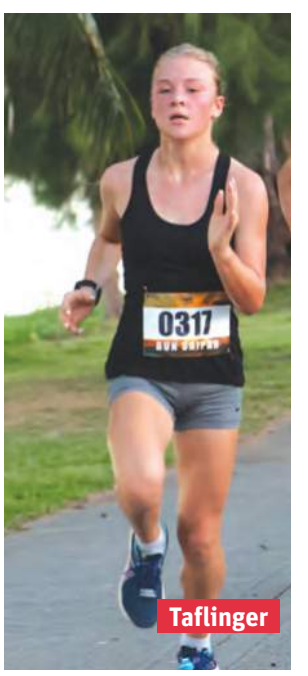
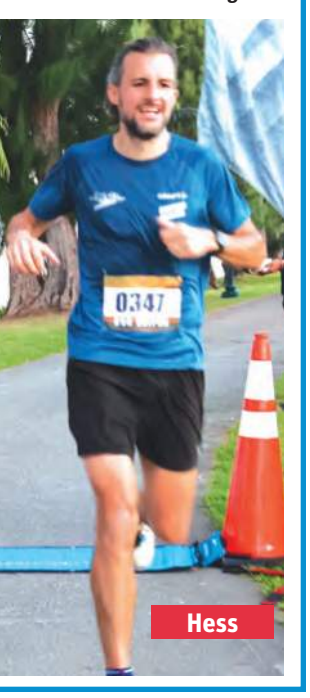
REPORTER

A Swiss visitor Martin Hess and middle school student Addalee Taflinger were the fastest runners in the Beach Road Pathway 10K, which was Day 1 of Run Saipan's grueling 2024 Trinity race series last Saturday morning.

They outgassed over 40 other runners in the back-and-forth course from The Shack to National Office Supply and back, with Martin Hess first overall at 38:38.31, while Taflinger came in first in the women's division at 52:08.86.

Sildrey Veloria was second to Hess with a time of 40:55.62, and third place was Victor Nash Santos who clocked in at 41:40.21.

Second to Taflinger was Shawna Brennfleck just 30 seconds later at 52:48.84, while Ann Bang came in third at 53:53.58.

Hess, from Switzerland who's visiting Saipan with his wife for two and a half weeks, said that the race

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